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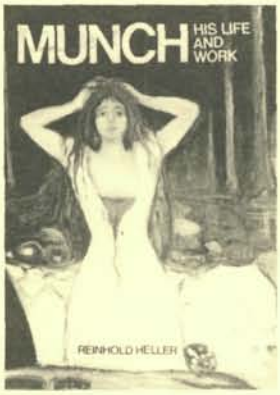

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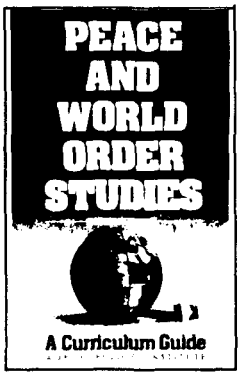

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Out of My Mind . . . . . .

Quantum Reality

JEREMY BERNSTEIN

For the last several years many professional physicists—myself included—have been increasingly distressed to see the way our métier has been invaded by carpetbaggers who either have no serious professional competence in a subject like quantum theory or who have chosen to exploit such competence as they do have by recasting the theory in a form where it might be used as a religious text in an ashram or as the blueprint for some sort of ectoplasmic séance. A few years ago, in these pages, I went into some detail with an example of the latter when I reviewed Fritjof Capra's book *The Tao of Physics*. Capra has recently published another book, *The Turning Point*, which is even sillier than the first one. Since writing that review I have been giving these matters a great deal more thought. In particular, I have decided that my previous essay was badly defective because it focused on criticizing what I felt to be a superficial and exploitative book rather than on trying to explain the subject matter—namely, the nature of reality in light of the insights of the quantum theory.

In this essay, I will concentrate on what I think are the issues. Before doing so, by way of introduction, I should like to say a little something about the great Austrian-born physicist Erwin Schrödinger, who, along with Werner Heisenberg and Paul Adrien Maurice Dirac, invented in the mid-1920s what we call quantum theory. It was Dirac who in the 1920s noted laconically that, even then, the quantum theory explained "most of physics and all of chemistry." It still does.

Schrödinger has always been a hero of mine not only for his work in physics but for his general moral character and his extraordinary breadth of scholarship, which he revealed in some wonderful books based on various lectures. Each book, whether it be about physics, biology, the Greeks, or, more germanely to the present subject, his deeply held oriental, religious-mystic views, was written with marvelous lucidity and high wit. I had the privilege of spending a morning with Schrödinger in the spring of 1960. I was then working at the Boltzmann Institute in Vienna and was taken to see Schrödinger in his old-fashioned, book-strewn Viennese apartment by Walter Thirring, the Institute's director. Schrödinger, who was born in 1887, was, when I saw him, very frail and ill. He looked at us through a pair of glasses that magnified his eyes so that they seemed enormous. At one point he said, "There is one thing that modern scientists do not understand which the Greeks understood," after which he paused for several seconds, while we wondered what was coming next, and then he added, "modesty!" He shared with Einstein the skeptical attitude that modern physics, and, in particular, the quantum theory, was the last word—the "true Jacob," as Einstein once put it.

Schrödinger died on January 4, 1961, half a year after our visit. When we saw him he was correcting the proofs of his book, which was first published in German in 1961 and posthumously in English in 1964 under the title *My View of the World*. He had originally written one of the essays in the book in 1925, the time when he must have been in the midst of his work on the quantum theory. In it he summarized his religious-mystic views in the Hindu formula: "I am in the east and in the west, I am below and above, *I am this whole world.*" What struck me about his 1961 book was its preface, in which he states in so many words that none of his oriental, religious-mystic feel-

✪ JEREMY BERNSTEIN's latest book, *Three Degrees Above Zero*, is a profile of the Bell Telephone Laboratories.

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ings have the slightest thing to do with the quantum theory. He writes: "Not a word is said here of acausality, wave mechanics, indeterminacy relations, complementarity, an expanding universe, continuous creation, etc. . . . On this I can cheerfully justify myself; because I do not think that these things have as much connection as is currently supposed with a philosophical view of the world." Where angels fear to tread. . . .

Here I would like to remark—perhaps surprisingly—that most working physicists have, at best, a very marginal interest in the outré aspects of the quantum theory of measurement, such as "Bell's theorem" (of which more later) and the so-called Einstein, Podolsky, and Rosen experiment (of which there will also be more later). Notwithstanding that fact, the "carpetbaggers" discuss these matters as if they were the heart and soul of modern physics. To illustrate the point, I made a survey of thirteen quantum mechanics texts, the sort of books one actually uses to teach the subject to serious physics students. The texts were addressed to readers at all levels, from beginners to graduate students. Of the thirteen, not *one* mentioned Bell's theorem. Two of the books mentioned the Einstein, et al., experiment, but one of the references, it turned out, was simply an acknowledgment of the other. That reference occurs in a book, which was written in 1951 by the physicist David Bohm, entitled simply *Quantum Theory*. Although on the discursive side, it is one of the best books I know for the serious student.

There is, I once heard, an odd story connected with Bohm's text. When he wrote it, Bohm was teaching at Princeton University. (He ran afoul of the McCarthy witch-hunts and left the country during the early 1950s, and he has just retired from the University of London.) While he was finishing his book, I heard, he decided that it might be interesting to visit Einstein and discuss with the old man some of the latter's objections to the theory. In the course of this, the story goes, Bohm became so convinced of Einstein's misgivings that he has spent a substantial part of his research effort in recent years to try to put Einstein's ideas to work. The physicist David Pines, who was Bohm's student at that time, tells me—alas—that this story is not quite correct. Bohm did see Einstein several times while he was writing his text, but he had already developed his own misgivings while he was writing the last chapter, which is concerned with the quantum theory of measurement. There is not a hint of those misgivings in the book. My own feeling is that Bohm got it right in the first place, and his book is, at least for me, entirely persuasive.

A good place to start our task is, I think, with Einstein's misgivings. In a deep sense Einstein invented the quantum in a paper he wrote in 1905, the same year he published his paper on the special theory of relativity. Compared to the quantum paper, the relativity paper, which very few of his contemporaries understood, was conservative. In his quantum paper Einstein demonstrated, starting from experimental results, that light comes in quantum units of energy, something that was completely unexpected. This was implicit in the work of Einstein's predecessor Max Planck, but Planck had not been able to accept fully the idea. My teacher Philipp Frank once characterized the difference between Einstein and Planck in this respect as follows: Beer is bought and sold in quantum units of cans and bottles, but this is an accident of commerce. Beer can come in any units. Planck accepted the idea that light is emitted and absorbed—bought and sold—in quanta, but Einstein took the next step and said that light *consisted* of quanta. "Beer" always comes in bottles and cans, something that Planck would not accept until years later.

For the next decade Einstein did not publish very much about the quantum, although in 1907 he wrote a paper that laid the foundations for what we would now call the quantum theory of solids. But his correspondence shows that he was thinking incessantly about these matters, and in later life he noted that he had spent much more time thinking about the quantum theory than about anything else.

In 1913 Niels Bohr presented the first quantum theory of the atom, in which, in the simplest example—hydrogen—an electron is imagined as circulating around a nuclear proton in a vague analogy with the way the moon circulates around the earth. The analogy is vague because the electron's orbits were, according to Bohr, "quantized," meaning that only certain discrete orbits were allowed. When the electron went—"jumped"—from one orbit to another, light (or, more generally,

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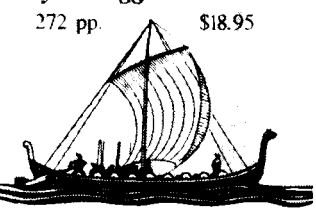

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electromagnetic radiation) was emitted. The astonishing thing about Bohr's model was that these allowed frequencies of light agreed with the regularities that were known to exist in the spectrum of hydrogen. Einstein was much taken by Bohr's ideas and referred to them as the highest form of "musicality" available to thought.

The next things that Einstein published on the quantum theory, and which have had a lasting influence, were a series of papers he wrote in 1916 and 1917 on the emission and absorption of radiation by atoms. In these papers one finds, among other things, the theoretical foundation of what became the laser. It appears as if his real misgivings about the theory began to emerge about the time he wrote these papers. He was already beginning to see that the quantum theory was going to force the abandonment of the causal character of specific events in favor of some kind of statistical or probabilistic approach. During the next few years it gradually became clear that Bohr's 1913 theory could only be the beginning. The theory gave essentially no account of the relative brightness of the various spectral lines, even for the simplest atoms; and when it was applied to atoms with many electrons, it failed altogether. Nonetheless, before 1926, the year that Schrödinger published his first paper, there had developed an enormous literature on what one now calls the "old" quantum theory—the immediate generalization of Bohr's work—most of which is now antiquated.

The next development came from an entirely unexpected quarter, although it is possible that Einstein may also have had some intimation of it. In 1923 Louis de Broglie—a French nobleman whose brother, also a physicist, had a private laboratory—produced a *Thèse de Doctorat* that contained the revolutionary idea that electrons, up to then assumed to be some sort of particle, might also have a wave character. This notion restored a certain lost symmetry, since light, which was known to have wave-like characteristics, came in particle-like quanta. De Broglie, and also Einstein, thought at first that these waves might be real physical waves that somehow were attached to the electrons and guided their motion. This was, apparently, also Schrödinger's idea when he produced the wave equation that bears his name and that is to the quantum theory what Newton's equations of motion are to classical mechanics.

It soon turned out that this interpretation of the waves was not tenable, and in 1926 the German physicist Max Born introduced the interpretation of waves that we still use—namely, that the wave functions are related to the *probabilities* of finding the electrons at various locations in space. The Bohr "orbits" represent those regions in space around the atom where these probabilities are maximized. (Recently I learned that Max Born was the grandfather of the British pop singer Olivia Newton-John, an astonishing piece of genealogical news that may, or may not, confirm the Darwinian theory of evolution.)

The probability interpretation of the quantum theory was too much for Einstein, and by 1927 he began an attempt, which lasted several years, to dream up hypothetical experiments that would show the theory was basically inconsistent—that is, simply wrong. One of the more remarkable examples occurred in 1930 at a conference at which Einstein presented a scheme that appeared to violate one of Werner Heisenberg's principles of uncertainty. After a sleepless night, Bohr pointed out to Einstein that he had forgotten to take into account an artifact of his own theory of gravitation, and once that was done the uncertainty principle re-emerged. But in 1935, after Einstein had moved to Princeton, he, in collaboration with two young physicists—Boris Podolsky and Nathan Rosen—proposed yet another experiment that they claimed demonstrated that the quantum theory did not and could not offer a complete description of reality.

For me the most lucid account of Einstein's final views about the quantum theory is found in the collection *Albert Einstein: Philosopher-Scientist,* the wonderful collection of essays edited by the philosopher P. A. Schilpp and first published in 1949. It contains Einstein's marvelous autobiographical essay and also, at the end of the book, his reply to his critics. Einstein had been taken rather roundly to task by people like Born for his attitude toward the quantum theory, and he had replied in kind. Indeed he notes, "I have the distressing feeling that I have expressed myself, in this reply, not merely somewhat longwindedly but also rather sharply. This observation may serve as my excuse: one can

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really quarrel only with his brothers or close friends; others are too alien. . . ." In this reply Einstein states his position on the quantum theory very succinctly. He writes: "What does not satisfy me in that theory, from the standpoint of principle, is its attitude towards that which appears to me to be the programmatic aim of all physics: the complete description of any (individual) real situation (as it supposedly exists irrespective of any act of observation or substantiation)."

On the surface this "programmatic aim" seems so reasonable that it is difficult to imagine how quantum theory or, indeed, any deep theory of physics could be in contradiction to it. To understand what is going on we shall consider a specific example—indeed, the very example that Einstein himself considers in the next paragraph of his "reply." He imagines a single radioactive atom located somewhere in space. By definition such an atom will spontaneously disintegrate—decay—into other objects, such as electromagnetic quanta and one or more lighter atoms. The details of what it decays into are not relevant for the present discussion.

But we may now ask, Is it possible to predict at what time the atom in front of us will decay? The quantum theoretical answer is no. We can only predict the *probability* that it will have decayed after a certain time. The quantum theory in this sense provides a kind of actuarial table that we can use to compute the chances that the atom will still be with us in a few seconds, an hour, or a millenium. But as to the precise moment when the atom will decay, the theory is mute. This silence of a statistical theory is something that we readily accept when it comes to *real* actuarial tables. They do not predict the actual time of anyone's death—something for which we can all be grateful—but rather they tell us, on the average, how many of us will still be around at a certain age.

Einstein, of course, understood all of this. But he concluded that what it meant was that the quantum theory was *incomplete* in the sense that it applied only to the statistics of large numbers of atoms and failed to tell us about the deterministic behavior of any one atom. He then asked why the quantum theorists don't adopt this point of view: the point of view that the theory is incomplete. He notes, "There exists, however, a simply psychological reason for the fact that this most nearly obvious interpretation is being shunned. For if the statistical quantum theory does not pretend to describe the individual system (and its development in time) completely, it appears unavoidable to look elsewhere for a complete description of the individual system. . . ." In other words, Einstein is saying that the quantum theorists will not admit that their theory is incomplete because that would oblige them to look for another theory, despite the fact that the quantum theory is the most successful physical theory ever invented.

Indeed, in a kind of dialogue with himself, Einstein goes on to say, "I now imagine a quantum theoretician who may even admit that the quantum-theoretical description refers to ensembles of systems, but who, nevertheless, clings to the idea that the type of description of the statistical quantum theory will, in its essential features, be retained in the future. He may argue as follows: True, I admit that the quantum-theoretical description is an incomplete description of the individual system. I even admit that a complete theoretical description is, in principle, thinkable. But I consider it proven that the search for such a complete description would be aimless. For the lawfulness of nature is thus constituted that the laws can be completely and suitably formulated within the framework of our incomplete description." In other words, Einstein is saying that, while it is not inconceivable that such a "complete" description—whatever that means—might be found, the orthodox quantum theorist, of which I am one, sees no reason to engage in what looks like a wild-goose chase to look for one since the existing theory has never failed to account for anything to which it has been applied. The futility of such a search seems to be epitomized by Einstein's own failure to find even the first steps toward such a theory.

In 1935 Einstein, Podolsky, and Rosen published their "experiment." It was not a real experiment but rather one of those *gedanken*—thought—experiments that Einstein was such a master at inventing. The original paper was much more complicated than it had to be, and the version that is now studied and discussed is the one that Bohm invented for his book. Even so, to understand it requires a good knowledge of quantum mechanics, and it is therefore with some trepidation that I will

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try to convey the essence of it in ordinary language. This is worthwhile to do because it forces one to confront the essence of the quantum theory of measurement.

In the Bohm version of the experiment one imagines a molecule that is composed of two atoms. Let us suppose that each of these atoms is like a tiny gyroscope, or top, that can spin around its axes. We shall imagine that each of them is spinning at the same rate, but in opposite directions. We would describe this situation by saying that the net "angular momentum" of the system is zero. The angular momentum of each of the atoms just cancels the other. We can further suppose that, say, the atom to the left as we look at the molecule is the one that is spinning clockwise, while the atom to the right is spinning counterclockwise (we can call clockwise spin "up" and counterclockwise "down"). In describing things this way, it will turn out, I am implicitly assuming measurement procedures that are appropriate only to classical physics. The quantum situation is radically different.

Now let us imagine that this molecule spontaneously disintegrates in such a way that the two atoms fly off in opposite directions but, as they do so, they preserve the orientations of their spinning tops. This means that there is no change in the total angular momentum during the disintegration process, which, in fact, agrees with the law of conservation of angular momentum that applies in nature to processes like these.

We may now imagine that the two atoms fly apart from each other some great distance—miles apart, say. Stationed at this great distance apart are two measuring facilities that are capable of measuring the angular momentum—the spin—of each atom. If, for example, I am stationed at one of these facilities and I measure the spin pointing in a certain direction—clockwise or counterclockwise—of the atom that arrives where I am, I can guarantee, by the conservation of angular momentum, the atom that arrives at the other spatially separated measuring facility will have its angular momentum pointing in the *opposite* direction. I can couch this in the following language. Until the atom arrives at my station, the only thing I know about it is that it will have its spin up *or* down, but I don't know which. The odds on its being up, say, are fifty-fifty. Once I make my measurement, I *know* where the spin is pointing and so the odds on it pointing in the other direction suddenly drop to zero. Likewise the odds of my partner who is separated from me finding anything but a spin opposite to mine also drop to zero.

This sudden jumping of probabilities is very characteristic of probabilities that can change the instant I am in possession of additional information. That the odds have also suddenly jumped at a far distant place has nothing to do with telepathy or anything else that is mystical. It is an obvious feature of the situation. My distant partner will not know the odds have changed until either I inform him by telephone, say, or he makes his own measurement. I bring this up because the same question arises in quantum theory and in an essential way, since that theory is entirely concerned with predicting probabilities. That these probabilities make these jumps after measurements appears to have caused incredible confusion among people who try to make quantum mechanics into some sort of spiritualistic metaphysics. Some of them claim that, when the probabilities change at these distant places, it means that signals are exchanged that move faster than light. Some have even tried to use this argument to claim that quantum mechanics supports some sort of telepathy. I have tried to make it clear that this is all nonsense. No signals are exchanged when the probabilities jump, and all the signals that are eventually exchanged travel at speeds that are less than or equal to the speed of light.

The quantum mechanical view of the matter brings to bear some essentially new features. We can certainly imagine a molecule consisting of two atoms, each with a spin and arranged in such a way that the total angular momentum of the system is zero. But we cannot say, without making an explicit measurement, that the left atom's spin is up and the right atom's is down—something we assumed we could do in the classical situation. The "state" of total spin zero is, in quantum mechanics, a mixture of these two possibilities; the two possibilities being that the left-hand spin is up and the right-hand spin is down (or conversely). We can still imagine that the molecule disintegrates without changing the total angular momentum and that the two atoms fly off to great distances from each other in opposite directions. We can still station

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observers armed with equipment that can measure whether the spin of an atom is pointing in a given direction. Now, however, something surprising happens. No matter what direction we choose to measure the spin, there is a fifty-fifty chance that we will find the spin pointing in that *arbitrary* direction. But once we make that measurement we know for certain that the other observer will find the spin pointing in the opposite direction.

Let's think about that for a minute. In the classical case the two atoms flew off like little gyroscopes with their spins always pointing in whatever directions they started out with. In quantum mechanics we can't make a statement like that unless we have made a specific measurement that reveals it. This past year I audited a remarkable course at Columbia University on foundation problems in physics. The course was given by the physicist John Wheeler, who is retired from Princeton but having a very active new career at the University of Texas. Wheeler's course was addressed to young graduate students in physics and dwelt in part on just the sorts of problems I have been discussing here. At one point he summarized the difference between the classical view of measurement and the quantum view in a dialogue between two baseball umpires.

CLASSICAL UMPIRE: I calls 'em the way they *are*.

QUANTUM UMPIRE: They ain't *nothin'* until I calls 'em.

This goes to the heart of the matter. Classical physicists, such as Einstein, retained the belief that there is an additional underlying reality—"the way they *are*"—over and above what our present measurements reveal and that this reality is governed by fully deterministic laws. The example that Einstein often gave is what is known as Brownian motion. Tiny particles suspended in liquids appear to wander about the liquids in an apparently random way. But, in fact, these random walks are the result of billions of collisions between these particles and the molecules of the liquid. Insofar as these collisions obey the laws of classical physics, they are completely deterministic and give a deterministic explanation for the apparently random walk of the Brownian particles. It was Einstein who first put all of this on a quantitative basis for Brownian motion in 1905, the same year he created both relativity and the quantum, and his lifelong preoccupation was to try to do this again for the quantum theory.

The orthodox quantum theorists regard such a superstructure as totally irrelevant. They—we—accept the fact that, as far as measurements go, "They ain't *nothin'* until I calls 'em." This might appear to raise the specter of quantum mechanics being a totally subjective enterprise, something that also comes up in some popular books. It is important to point out that the "I" in Wheeler's formulation need not be, and usually is not, a person. It can be a photographic plate, which might be read weeks after the actual measurement was made, or a computer printout. The point is that measurements do not, according to quantum theory, change some pre-existing physical quantity, such as the direction of one of the spins. It is only after the measurement that the spin *has* a direction. A quantum state only tells us the *probability* that the spin might be in that direction once we have made the measurement.

The Einstein, Podolsky, and Rosen experiment forces us to confront all of this in an acute way. The thing that makes it especially acute is the "non-locality" of the phenomenon. Our two observers are very widely separated. Yet if one determines that the spin of the atom that arrives at his measuring facility points in a given direction, or, more exactly speaking, does a measurement that acts as a filter allowing only spins pointing in that direction to pass through, we can guarantee that the distant observer will discover his atom is spinning in the opposite direction. If the first observer re-orients his filter without informing the second observer, then the second observer will find his probabilities for finding spins in various directions are also realtered.

It would appear, naively, as if this were some sort of black magic. But, as I have tried to indicate, it is not black magic; it is the way in which probabilities work. When we discover something new about a system, the probabilities suddenly change, and each measurement is a new discovery. Nonetheless, the non-intuitive character of this behavior has inspired some of the modern generation of quantum theorists to try to find alternatives to the theory. The direction in which Bohm, and

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others, have looked is what are called "hidden variables." This is the idea that there might be underlying deterministic variables that would govern the behavior of objects like spins in just such a way as to reproduce the experimental results of the quantum theory, which, as far as we know, are correct.

In the early 1930s, the Hungarian-born mathematician John von Neumann gave what purported to be a proof that this was impossible. But what has set the present generation to work was the discovery of loopholes in von Neumann's proof. Taking advantage of such a loophole, Bohm managed to construct such a theory. However, it has a major inconvenience that, as far as most of us are concerned, makes it worse than the "disease" it is supposed to cure. The theory is what is called "non-local," which means, to put it crudely, that to use it to predict what is happening at the detector near me I would have to take into account, in principle, all of what is happening everywhere in the universe, including behind the moon. This seems even less intuitive than the quantum theory.

My friend and colleague J. S. Bell, an Irish-born physicist who works at the gigantic particle physics laboratory—CERN—outside of Geneva, has proven that this feature of Bohm's model is quite general. It applies to all hidden variable theories that exactly reproduce the results of the quantum theory. "Bell's theorem," as it is known, appears to close the door on trying to reproduce the results of the quantum theory with any simple, local theory having deterministic hidden variables. More than that, it has provided an additional way to test the quantum theory itself since it must necessarily differ from a local theory with hidden variables. Several precise experiments have now been done along these lines, and all of them confirm the quantum theory.

Everything we know about the history of science assures us that the quantum theory, like all scientific generalizations, will eventually fail. Newtonian mechanics, born in the mid-seventeenth century, gave way to relativity in the early twentieth century and thus holds the present record for longevity of a physical theory. The pace of scientific discovery is so great that theories now whiz past us like express trains. The other thing that the history of physics teaches us, or should teach us, is that these revolutions cannot be predicted, either as to when they will occur or what form they will take. Up to now, nature has constantly surprised us. The only great theory in physics that was invented out of almost pure thought—with very little experimental basis—was Einstein's general theory of relativity and gravitation, which he published in 1915–16. This experience seems to have marked Einstein, and he tried to repeat it, without success, in his efforts to replace the quantum theory. He tried to think his way beyond the quantum theory with essentially no guide from experiment. It just didn't work. We still have no guide from experiment about where the theory will break. But of one thing we can be sure: when it does finally break, it will be one of the most exciting moments in the history of science.

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Life and Letters

This Sporting Life

ARISTIDES

Time, how do I waste thee? Let me count the ways: In lengthy telephone conversations with friends, chatting and laughing, schmoozing away the irreplaceable substance in fifteen-, thirty-, and forty-five-minute chunks. In reading bland and mostly biased accounts of terrible troubles in Gdansk and Damascus, Beirut and Bombay, then watching it served up yet again, this time with audiovisual aids, by creamy-cheeked men and women whom we call anchorpersons, the English call newsreaders, and the French call *speakerines*—the news, which as soon as it is written or said isn't new anymore, much time dropped down the drink here. In dreaming while awake, casting my mind back over its increasingly lengthy past, sliding it forward over its increasingly shortened future, lolling about in time past and time future while effectively obliterating time present. In other innumerable small ways—the little detour into the used bookshop, the false start on yet another intellectual venture, the empty social evening—I have devised no shortage of efficient methods of smothering time. I am someone who knows very well what T. S. Eliot meant when he spoke of the "necessary laziness" of the poet. I only wish a person equally distinguished had come forth to speak on behalf of my condition—the unnecessary laziness of the non-poet.

But when talking about wasting time, I seem to have left out my most impressive achievement in this line. Far and away my most serious work as a time-waster is in watching men—sometimes but less often women—in various costumes running or jumping or hitting each other, smacking, kicking, shooting, or stroking balls of different sizes into cylinders, goals, gloves, or nets. With the sole exception of auto racing, there is no game, match, contest, or race I will not watch. "Dear Boy," wrote Lord Chesterfield to his illegitimate son, Philip Stanhope, "There is nothing which I more wish that you should know, and which fewer people do know, than the true use and value of time. It is in everybody's mouth; but in few people's practice." In this same letter, Chesterfield tells the boy, "I knew a gentleman, who was so good a manager of his time, that he would not even lose that small portion of it, which the calls of nature obliged him to pass in the necessary-house; but gradually went through all the Latin poets, in those moments." I tremble to think what, were I Chesterfield's son, his reaction would be to his learning that I, over the past year, have spent time watching men with permanents and blow-dry hairdos bowling, other men in lavender and yellow trousers hitting golf balls, and stout women arm wrestling. "Dear Boy," I imagine him writing to me, "You seem to making a necessary-house of your entire life."

From time to time I tell myself that I am going to stop, I am going to knock off watching all these games and useless competitions. Enough is enough, I say, quit now, while you're well behind; go cold turkey, put paid to it, be done, write finis, mutter kaput—enough is too much. The prospect dangling deliciously before me if I were to stop watching so much sports is that of regaining ample hunks of time that I might otherwise, and oh so much more wisely, spend. What might I do with the time not spent watching sports? Ah, what might I not do? Listen to opera, acquire a foreign language, learn to play the flute, go into the commodities market, actually play a sport. The possibilities, while not precisely limitless, are nonetheless very grand. Perhaps I shall one day do it. Wait, as loyal fans in cities with losing teams say, until next year.

If it were actually to come about, if next year I were to free myself of my bondage to

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watching sports, it would be a year like no other I can recall in my life. From earliest boyhood I have been a games man, passionately interested in playing games and in everything to do with them. In the neighborhoods in which I grew up, being a good athlete was the crowning achievement; not being good at sports was permitted, though not caring at all about sports, for a boy, was a certain road to unpopularity. Ours was strictly a meritocracy, with merit measured in coordination and agility and knowledge about sports.

The best-loved kid in our neighborhood was a boy named Marty Summerfield, whose father had pitched briefly for the Chicago White Sox. Marty was smallish, but he combined very high athletic prowess with absolutely astonishing physical courage. Still in grade school, I can recall him at least twice having to be carried off football fields with a concussion; in baseball, he would chase a foul pop-up off the playground into the street, where he would catch it to the screech of car brakes and the angry honking of horns; in later years I saw him refuse to back away from fights with young men six inches taller and fifty or so pounds heavier than he. There was no brag to him or any meanness. He had a smile that made *you* happy. He was our Billy Budd, but, thank goodness, there was never any need to hang him.

Although Marty Summerfield was very intelligent—he went off to college on a Westinghouse science scholarship—I do not recall his showing much interest in the statistics, lore, or other of the spectatorial aspects of sports; certainly not as much as I and others of us who were not anywhere near so good at sports as he. I have noted this phenomenon repeat itself in later years. Truly good athletes, men and women who can or once could really do it, seem not all that interested in talking about it. (Please allow for many exceptions here, chief among them the former athletes hired by television networks and stations to do "color" or to report sports news.) Ernest Hemingway's endless talk about sports—about baseball and boxing and hunting—has always made me think that he was merely passable as an athlete. As with sex, so with sports: too much talk about it tends to leave one a bit dubious.

Somehow it seems unlikely that a great writer would also be a very good athlete, almost as if the two forms of grace—verbal and physical—were in their nature necessarily contradictory. William Hazlitt was very earnest about the game called "fives," but how good he was at it I do not know. Orwell played a version of rugby football at Eton, though, unlike Hazlitt, never, as far as I know, wrote about sports. Vladimir Nabokov played soccer at Cambridge and is said to have been a very respectable tennis player, yet his pleasure in any game was greatly exceeded by his pleasure in lepidopterology. F. Scott Fitzgerald claimed that not playing football at Princeton was one of the great disappointments in his life. Evelyn Waugh played field hockey for his college (Hertford) at Oxford, noting of it, rather Waughfully, "There is a pleasant old world violence about the game which appeals to one strongly." This makes Waugh seem the possessor of greater athletic aplomb than he apparently had. A former student of Waugh's during his teaching days in the early 1920s remembers otherwise:

> In the matter of games he was in fact so undistinguished a performer that after a few humorous episodes it was thought better that he should not exercise with the senior boys. He was issued with a whistle and allowed to amble harmlessly around the football field with the ten-year-olds. In the summer term, still wearing his plus fours, he was a reluctant umpire at the cricket games of novices.

It would be a monumental surprise, not to say an outright astonishment, to learn that Henry James was a superior athlete, but the facts hold no such surprise in store. Yet throughout his adult life Henry James, in his ultimately losing battle against corpulence, had recourse to one or another athletic activity as a form of exercise. He rode horses in Rome, took fencing lessons in London, cycled round Sussex after he had moved to Rye; at one point he lifted dumbbells, difficult as it may be to picture Henry James, as we now say, "pumping iron." There is a lovely letter in the fourth volume of the *Henry James Letters*, from James to his godson Guy Hoyer Millar, in which he writes to the boy: "I learned from your mother, by pressing her hard, some time ago that it would be a convenience to you and a great help in your career to possess an Association football—whereupon, in my desire that you should receive the precious ob-

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ject from no hand but mine I cast about me for the proper place to procure it." In the course of the letter, in which James informs the boy that the football is on its way to him in a separate parcel, he allows that "I'm an awful muff, too, at games—except at times I am not a bad cyclist, I think—and I fear I am only rather decent at playing at godfather."

As a boy, I was not an awful muff at games, but neither was I awfully good at them either. I was quick and well-coordinated, but insufficiently aggressive and too much concerned with form. (What connection do you suppose this might have with my taking such pleasure in writing these quite formless essays?) I don't believe I was ever deceived, even as a small boy, about my being able to play a sport in college or professionally, although I should have loved to have been good enough to be able to do so. To attempt to take my own athletic measure, I would say that, for a writer, I am a fair athlete, while among serious athletes I am, as an athlete, a fair writer. I think here again of poor Hemingway, of self-deceived Hemingway, always quick with the inapposite sports metaphor, who, in a *New Yorker* profile written by Lillian Ross, talked about his quality as a writer in boxing terms:

> I started out very quiet and I beat Mr. Turgenev. Then I trained hard and I beat Mr. de Maupassant. I've fought two draws with Mr. Stendhal, and I think I had an edge in the last one. But nobody's going to get me in any ring with Mr. Tolstoy unless I'm crazy or I keep getting better.

This rather famous passage makes me want to talk, in something like the same terms, not of my writing but of my athletic abilities. Let me put it this way: I'm ready anytime to play Ping-Pong with Mr. Balzac. And if Mr. Dostoyevsky ever cares to go one-on-one half court with me or to shoot a little game of "Horse," I'm ready to take him on, too. If either Miss Austen or Mrs. Woolf wishes to go head-to-head with me in an arm wrestling match, I think they both know where I can be reached. As for boxing, whenever he's ready to put on the gloves, tell Mr. Proust all he has to do is give me a jingle.

Until such time as any of these writers accepts my challenge, I can almost certainly be found seated on the south end of a couch, in a book-lined room, eight or so feet from a nineteen-inch Sony color television. There—you can count on it—I shall doubtless be watching exceedingly tall men slamming balls into baskets, or lumpily muscular men in helmets slamming themselves against one another. Then again I might be watching adolescent girls figure skating or doing gymnastics, or extremely wealthy young men and women thwacking fuzzy balls across a net, or slender men and women almost any of whom might easily qualify as the centerfold for Gray's *Anatomy* running distances far greater than the human body was ever intended to run. But if I were a betting man— which, as it happens, I am—I would bet that I would most likely be found watching a baseball game, for this game, which I never played very well as a boy, has become the game I more and more enjoy watching. Coaches speak of "benching" athletes, but I have been "couched." I don't want to know with any exactitude how much time I have spent over the years watching games from my couch, but my guess is that the amount of time would be—this is, as they say, a ballpark figure—roughly twice that which Penelope spent waiting for the return of Odysseus.

Booze and drugs, gambling and tobacco do not begin to exhaust the list of life's potential addictions. Some people cannot get through the day without a newspaper. Others take their fix in chocolate. I have been told that there are people who wig out on pasta. *The Concise Oxford Dictionary* defines *addict* colloquially as "enthusiastic devotee of sport or pastime." That's me—a colloquial addict. I don't require my fix every day, although I somehow feel rather cheerier if I know a game is coming up later in the day or during the evening. And if too many days pass without one, I do tend to get a touch edgy. I had my first serious intimation of this some eight or so years ago while on a two-week holiday in England, where, one evening in Bath, I realized that I hadn't watched a sports event for fully ten days and strongly felt the craving to do so. I turned on the television set in the hotel room to listen to the news. Then, suddenly, the BBC news-reader began to intone—it sounded like music to me—"East Birmingham 6, Brighton 4; Leeds 3, West Manchester 2; Bournemouth 4, Winchester 1." These were scores from soccer matches. I have almost no interest in soccer; I have certainly seen none of these teams. Yet I

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found the mere recitation of these scores soothing, and for the remainder of the holiday I looked forward to hearing soccer scores each evening. I believe this strange little anecdote establishes my bona fides as an addict—or, in the harsher term, "sports nut."

I have described some of the symptoms and labeled the disease, but you would be gravely mistaken if you are anticipating a cure. I have not found one and do not expect to. Instead of a cure, which is apparently unavailable, I seek a justification. What can be said on behalf of all the time I have put in watching games? Does it come to nothing more than—in the most literal sense of the word—a pastime, or passing time? Have my many hours spent watching games, either before my television or "live" (what a word!), been without any redeeming value? Am I doing nothing more than killing time? Enough questions. Stop stalling. Justify yourself or get off the couch. All right, since I have a few hours on my hands while awaiting a football game from the West Coast, let me try.

Although I scarcely watch sports for this reason, one of the benefits of watching them is that it keeps me in rather close touch with great numbers of my countrymen in a way that, without sports, I might otherwise have no hope to be. If you haven't a clue to what I mean here, please cast your eyes back over my previous sentence. What kind of person uses words such as *scarcely* or *rather* in the way that they are used in that sentence? Allow me to tell you what kind of person does—a bookish person. Without actually setting out to do so, I have become bookish. I am undeniably marked by the possession of general culture. I first noted this a few years ago when, after dining with a friend at an Italian restaurant in a lower-middle-class neighborhood, a woman waiting to be seated asked, "Where do you fellas teach?" "What do you mean 'teach'?" I asked. "My friend is the defensive line coach for the Miami Dolphins and I have a Buick agency in Terre Haute." This earned mild laughter, of the kind that follows enunciation of the phrase "Fat chance." In fact, my friend looked to me very much like a professor, which he is, but I had hoped I wasn't myself so readily identifiable. I guess I was still hopeful of passing for a not very successful lawyer, or perhaps a chemist, someone at any rate a little more in the world.

Not only do I apparently look to be what I am, but I also sound to be what I am. A year or so ago, in connection with a book I had written, I agreed to do a radio interview. The interview was taped, and four or five weeks later, on a Saturday morning, I listened to it play over the local public radio station. As I did so, I thought, My God, I have somehow acquired one of those FM classical music station voices—a voice better adapted to saying words such as *Köchel*, *thematic*, *Hindemith*, and *motif* than to saying words such as "Yes, a hamburger sounds great to me." I sounded to myself a bit pretentious, not to say a mite snooty. Could it be locutions like "not to say" that did it? Or could I be imagining the entire thing? Any hope that I might be imagining it was ended when, last month, the six-year-old daughter of friends asked my wife about me, "Why does he speak English instead of American?"

The point of all this is that I believe there is a major division in this country between a small group composed of people who care a great deal about language and ideas and art, and another, vastly larger group for whom such concerns are considerably less than central. The problem, in my experience, is that this first group, even when it does not intend to, has a way of putting the second group off, making its members feel uncomfortable, slightly inferior, as if their lives were brutish and their pursuits trivial. It may well be that many members of the first group are truly contemptuous of the second group. Often, though, the contempt works the other way round. It isn't for no reason, after all, that piano players in whorehouses used to be called "professor." Anyone who has belonged to the first group must at one time have felt the sting of the division I have in mind. I recall being about four hours into a poker game with a number of printers, and, when the deal passed to me, I said, "OK gents, ante up for five-card draw." At which point the guy sitting to my left, who was losing about eighty dollars, said, "Whaddya, some kind of goddamn Englishman?" Ah, me, as Turgenev's nihilist Bazarov says, "That's what comes of being educated people."

Not that I am displeased with being as I am—a man, that is, marked by the possession of general culture. I talk as I talk; I think as I think; I am what I am. My mind, such as it is,

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remains my greatest stay against boredom. Still, I find this division between the two groups sad. As a member of the first of these groups, I know I do not feel any contempt for the members of the second group. (Sorry to have to proclaim my own virtue here, but apparently no one else will come forth to proclaim it for me.) In fact, I tend to feel rather more contempt for members of my own group, the culturati, with whom I am more familiar—contempt, after all, being one of the items familiarity breeds.

Yet one of the things that make it possible to jump the barrier and cut across this division, at least in masculine society, is sports—more specifically, knowledge and talk about sports. (Here I must add that I have met many intellectuals, scholars, novelists, and poets whose addiction to sports is not less than my own. "Closet sports fans" is the way I think of them. Yet how easily they are flushed out of the closet. All one has to do is offer a strong opinion about one or another team or player in their presence and out they come.) For a bookish fellow in a democracy, knowledge about sports seems to me essential. But not for the bookish alone; not even for a fellow alone. A friend tells me about a woman he knows who operates at a fairly high level in the real estate business and who began to study the morning sports pages in the hope of making lunches with male colleagues and clients easier. The hope, as it turned out, was justified, for sports talk is the closest thing we have in this country to a lingua franca, though I wouldn't use that phrase in, say, a bowling alley or pool hall.

Sports talk is easier for me than for the woman in the real estate business, for I have grown up with sports, played at them as a kid, know them, and love to talk about them. I also know how inexhaustible sports can be as a subject; it sometimes seems, in fact, that there is more to say about yesterday's baseball game than about *Hamlet*. Nor do I think there is anything the least phony about using sports this way. As a conversational icebreaker, sports is very useful. It can rub away artificial distinctions. While sports may well be the toy department of life, not of towering intrinsic importance in itself, it can lead in and on to other, more intrinsically important subjects. Start with sports and before you know it you are talking economics, sociology, philosophy, personal hopes and fears. Socially, sports talk can be a fine lubricant.

I know I have often pressed sports into service, usually with decent results. I say "usually" and use the modest word "decent" because I think I may sometimes have gone too far. A few decades ago, for example, I found myself working in an urban renewal agency in the South. My fellow workers were mostly country boys. What they made of me I do not know. There was much to divide us: region, religion, politics. Asking them what they thought of the merits of the fiction of Jorge Luis Borges did not strike me as a happy way to glide over our differences. What did was sports. We talked Southwest Conference football, we talked baseball, we talked basketball. We got along.

I may have talked sports a little too well, for after a few weeks I was invited to play on the agency's basketball team in the local YMCA league. I showed up for the first game and learned that there were six members on the team, one of whom was in his early fifties. I was, in other words, a starter. Our opponents were made up of lean eighteen- and nineteen-year-olds of considerable height with, I remember thinking, rather menacing angularity of elbow. I had trained for this game by never smoking fewer than two packs of cigarettes daily for the previous ten years. Five or six times up and down the floor and I recall wondering if my life-insurance premiums were paid. Evidently time-outs had not yet been discovered in the South, for during the first ten minutes none were called. I had somehow managed to score three points, on a free throw and a crip lay-up. At the buzzer marking the end of the quarter, I walked over to the drinking fountain, into which I suavely vomited. Four or five games later, I went up for a rebound and, as good luck would have it, came down on my wrist, which was badly sprained. This excused me from further athletic combat. But the games I did play allowed me permanently to climb the barrier; in the eyes of the men I worked with I was OK and not a carpetbag intellectual.

But I don't want to push too hard the social advantages of knowing about sports. I don't watch them for social advantages. I watch them because most of the time they give pleasure. Nor do I believe that the reasons for my pleasure have much to do with per-

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sonal psychology; I don't believe, in other words, that in watching sports I am attempting to regain my youth, or finding an outlet for violent emotions, or living vicariously through the physical exploits of others. No, part of the pleasure for me in watching sports is that of witnessing men and women do supremely well what may not be worth doing at all. It is the craft of superior athletes that is so impressive, and that seems all the more impressive at a time when standards of craftsmanship seem badly tattered. Literary awards, academic chairs, political power, journalistic eminence—all frequently seem to be awarded to people whose claims upon them appear so thin, and sometimes even actually fraudulent. But when a sixteen-year-old girl gymnast needs a perfect ten-point performance to win an Olympic gold medal, or a twenty-year-old college basketball player has to sink two free throws to win a game while fifteen thousand people are screaming at him and a few million more are watching him over television, or a golfer has to sink a tricky twelve-foot, slightly uphill putt—none of them, in these moments, can call on public relations, or social connections, or small corruptions, or fast talk. All they can call on is their craft, which they either have or don't have.

Sports also supply the pleasures of craft under pressure. I find I respond extremely well to pressure—to other people under pressure, that is. It excites me; I marvel at it. Much of sports is pressure organized. At any rate, the great moments in sports are those when athletes play through and win out under immense pressure. I am all the more admiring of people who are able to do this because, in the few moments of athletic pressure I felt as a boy, I have known something of its crushing weight. "Clutching," "choking," "the lump" are but a few of the descriptions for people whose athletic craft is reduced as result of pressure. "Coming through," two of the loveliest words an athlete hopes to hear, is the phrase reserved for those whose craft is not impaired—is sometimes, in fact, heightened—by the presence of pressure. The grand spectacle of people coming through is one of the keenest pleasures of watching sports—and it is a spectacle not usually on display elsewhere with such shining clarity.

The spectacle of athletes not coming through, though not at all grand, is nonetheless much more moving. While we may admire the winners, most of us tend to side with the losers. Sports, it has been said, is about losing. There is a great deal to this, certainly when it comes to team sports. Coaches with preponderantly winning records exist in plenty, yet few are the teams that over the years seem to be able to repeat championship seasons. In professional sports, I can think of only three: the Montreal Canadiens, the New York Yankees, and the Boston Celtics. I have never cared enough about hockey to have passionate feelings about it, but I have liberally despised—"hated" is too passive a word—both the Yankees and the Celtics. What I have despised about them is that they won too frequently. I have discovered many people have similar feelings. Unless they happen to be one of your hometown teams, too-frequent winners in sports tend not to be appreciated. "Everybody loves a winner" is a truism that, in sports, doesn't hold up.

Of course, I speak as a fan, and a fan, it is well to remember, is short for a fanatic. Sports in America may well be the opiate of the people, but, as opiates go, it isn't a bad one. Often when watching a game on television, I will note the television camera focus on the crowd, whose members are to be found, index fingers raised aloft, screaming, "We're number one! We're number one!" and think how easily, in another country, similar faces might be screaming, "Perón! Perón!" or "Khomeini! Khomeini!" I have never seen an adequate explanation for the passion of the fan. Roger Angell, who writes about baseball for the *New Yorker*, has written that "belonging and caring" is what being a fan is about. But I have encountered too many instances of behavior on the part of fans that go beyond mere belonging and caring. I have a cousin with ulcers whose doctor advised him, unsuccessfully, to stop listening to Chicago Cubs games. Of fans of the same team, I recently read about a widow who each spring places a Cubs pennant on her husband's grave, and of a man, a Cubs fan for more than fifty years, whose deathbed words, his son claims, were, "We gotta get rid of Kingman" (a high-salaried player notable for not coming through). A Chicago Cubs fan myself, when that team this year lost its first chance to appear in a World Series in thirty-nine years by dropping its

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final play-off game to the San Diego Padres, I found I was mired in a slough of glumness that lasted fully a week. Fan-tastic. Such behavior cannot be explained to anyone who is not interested in sports; I cannot quite explain it to myself.

If we tend to idolize our athletes more than our politicians, I do not think that altogether a bad thing. I myself have not idolized an athlete since I was a small boy, but I have enjoyed the hell out of the really superior ones. *Dumb* appears before the word *jock* as frequently as *wily* before the name *Ho Chi Minh* and *untimely* before *death*, but I, for one, don't think athletes are unintelligent. They are unbookish, certainly; inarticulate, frequently; but dumb, scarcely ever, at least not at high levels of play. Instead their intelligence is concentrated upon their craft, and this they know in a way I can only hope I know mine. The only place I have ever seen the intelligence of athletes recognized is in the novel *Guard of Honor*, by James Gould Cozzens, where one of the book's protagonists assigns a military mission of importance to a young officer partly on the basis of his having played Big Ten football and thus being used to exerting his intelligence under real pressure.

While I do not idolize athletes, neither do I envy them. I consider them privileged human beings, men and women who have drawn lucky numbers in life's lottery. They are in the condition of someone born beautiful or to extremely wealthy parents. Lucky indeed. Professional athletes play games they love for salaries that take them effectively out of the financial wars that the rest of us must go on fighting our lives long. For a time the huge salaries that athletes have in recent years begun to earn bothered me. They are, in fact, immensely overpaid. Yet, as Sherwin Rosen has explained in an essay in this journal entitled "The Economics of Superstars" (Autumn 1983), owing to television and now cable television revenues, the money is there, and I myself would just as soon that Julius Erving, or Dave Winfield, or Walter Payton have ample hunks of it than that even more of it go to some real estate or insurance millionaire who owns a sports franchise chiefly to soothe his own itch for publicity. Some say that athletes are too privileged, that they garner too many rewards too soon. I recall once watching an interview with Wayne Gretzky, the great young hockey player of the Edmonton Oilers. One of the television johnnies pointed out to him that he, Gretzky, was at twenty-three already a millionaire many times over, that he had broken most of the records in his sport, that he would go down in history as one of the greatest hockey players the world has known. "Well, Wayne," the television johnny said, "what can you possibly have to look forward to?" Gretzky, not a fiercely articulate fellow, paused, then said, "Tonight's game."

Addict and fanatic that I am, I must also confess that few of the supposed "issues" having to do with sports in its contemporary settings greatly trouble me. Amateurism, for one, is an issue upon which much false piety has been expended. In college athletics violations having to do with recruiting athletes do occur, and are punished when discovered. But everyone—excepting perhaps the officials of the National Collegiate Athletic Association—assumes that a great many others go undiscovered. I once heard a radio announcer, a former pro football player covering a Chicago Bears–Detroit Lions game, ask where a tackle on the Lions had gone to college. "Notre Dame," said his companion in the broadcast booth. "He went from Notre Dame to Detroit?" the first announcer responded. "Hmm. He must have taken quite a cut in pay." The next week the announcer himself took quite a cut in pay, for he was fired. Perhaps rightly. Violations in amateur sports are like adultery: everyone knows it goes on; still, it will not do to condone it.

Tennis has now all but dispensed with amateurism, and nearly all involved in the sport feel better for having done so. Track and field looks as if it might be the next sport to do so. In Eastern European and other Communist countries there is no hypocrisy about amateurism because there isn't any amateurism; in this regard one may say about them what Randall Jarrell said about the college president in his novel *Pictures from an Institution*: "He had not evolved to the stage of moral development at which hypocrisy is possible." Most universities and colleges that have big-time football and basketball programs have arrived at that requisite stage of moral development—and, hence, at hypocrisy, too. With millions and millions of dollars involved in gate receipts and television revenues and millions more for those teams that

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get to bowl games and postseason tournaments, college athletics aren't what they used to be.

But, then, neither is college. And because it is not, because so much of the prestige of college has been dissipated and the quality of education degraded, it becomes more and more difficult to think of the majority of college athletes at schools with big-time programs as anything other than young men serving out their athletic apprenticeships in the hope of one day becoming professionals. When such basketball players as Magic Johnson and Isaiah Thomas leave school at the end of their second or third year, or when a young man skips college altogether to make a run at a baseball career, one no longer exclaims, sadly, "But their education! What a shame!" Education is only good, after all, if it is really education. What is impressive to me is a young man who plays a major sport at a major school and is still able to find time to devote himself to serious studies, let alone excel in them. My guess is that the number of such young men is not legion.

At this point I believe I am scheduled to deliver a political rant, bemoaning the rise of the power of money and the fall of the prestige of education. But sports fans, when it comes to sports, are curiously apolitical. They tend to take the world of sports pretty much as they find it. Within the realm of sports itself, they tend to be purist conservative—that is, they want the sports world forever to remain as they found it. Innovation is anathema. Apart from improvements in equipment, almost all changes that affect the games themselves are regarded as regrettable. This at any rate is my view. I dislike the advent of Astro Turf in baseball and football; I dislike both the three-point play in pro and the shot clock in college basketball and the new dominance of the slam dunk in both; I dislike the designated hitter in baseball; I dislike the tie-breaker in tennis. . . . Some sports seem less sacrosanct than others: gradual changes in the game of pro football are permissible, yet alter baseball and you are fooling with the liturgy. To paraphrase the old and long-dead Chicago alderman Paddy Bauler, "Sports ain't ready for reform."

As much pleasure as sports have given me over the years, I am sure I do not want to have more to do with them than I now do. True, before I hang up my couch, I should like to see, in person, "live," a few World Series games, a Super Bowl, a Kentucky Derby, a Wimbledon final. But I shouldn't want to be a sportswriter or broadcaster. I once wrote an article about an elegant pro basketball player named Bob Love; in preparation for it I went to eight or ten of his team's practice sessions; I interviewed him and his coach and his teammates. Along with the fee for the article, I was given a press pass for a full season's games. It was good fun, superior jock-sniffing, in the locker-room phrase. Somehow, though, I felt too much like a camp follower, which is the true relation of the press to the actions they cover. One such article is all I ever care to write. Visiting the toy department is nice, but who wants to live there?

In watching sports, I seek not so much a golden mean or even a silver one but will settle for something akin to a tarnished bronze mean. Achieving anything like real moderation here is now well beyond me. If I never watch another game, I have already seen many more than my share. But I fully intend to watch another game, and another and another and another. My justification is that doing so gives me great delight; my defense is that it causes no known harm, and, on occasion, I learn a thing or two from it. Yet a number of years ago I recall hearing that Eric Sevareid, who was then reading the Sunday evening news on CBS, complained that it was demeaning to as serious a man as he to have to give the day's sports scores on his news show. I hope that this is true, for if it isn't I owe Mr. Sevareid an apology for thinking of him, ever after, as a starter on my All-American Pomposity team, along with William Jennings Bryan, Daniel Ellsberg, Barbara Walters, and the older Orson Welles. I don't know about anyone else, but I would rather have those sports scores than Eric Sevareid's opinions about NATO, the Sino-Soviet dispute, and the balance of payments. Not that I don't think about such things. I do, but I can't say that I look forward to them. What do I look forward to? Among other things, along with Wayne Gretzky, to tonight's game.

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M.B.A.

PETER BAIDA

GRADUATE SCHOOLS OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION are odd places, not least in the attitudes of the students toward the faculty and administrative staff. Professors rank high; the dean ranks high; but highest of all, easily the most sought-after, fawned-upon figure on campus, is the Director of Placement. As an undergraduate majoring in the liberal arts, I had managed to drift through four years at an eminent university without ever considering the possibility—and without ever having anyone suggest the possibility—that the Director of Placement might be a person whose counsel I should seek. At business school, the electric high point of orientation week was a speech made by the Director to a fiercely attentive crowd packed into the largest auditorium on campus.

"You are not here to learn Finance or Marketing or Business Economics," the Director announced (or so I remember it). "And you are not here to get a job." A shocked hush: every man and woman in the audience of future executives was there to get a job, so hearts stood still until the Director boomed triumphantly, "You are here to start a career, and getting a job is just the first step."

Until that moment, I had never considered the distinction between a job and a career. Though I did not know it, I had stumbled into one of the most competitive M.B.A. programs in the country—the M.B.A. program at the Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania—in a state of utter innocence. I believed that I was about to embark on two years of hard work that would qualify me for a mildly pleasant or mildly unpleasant job shuffling papers. In fact, I was about to make myself into a new man—a fellow so strange that, even after five years in his company, I found myself tempted to start this essay with an echo of F. Scott Fitzgerald: "Let me tell you about M.B.A.'s. They're different from you and me."

How are we different? What does business school do to us or for us? What do we learn that sets us apart? After we graduate, do we use what we learn? If we use it, does it help or hurt our employers? Are we worth the extravagant salaries that we're rumored to command?

I do not claim that everyone will accept my answers. For one thing,

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my perspective is suspect. Throughout my two years at Wharton, and through much of my life as a professional manager, I have felt like a spy in a foreign country. Worse, I have felt like a spy without a comprehensible mission. Worst of all, I have become a lazy spy. For this essay I have conducted no systematic research; I have gathered almost no data; I have devoted exactly one afternoon to interviews. I have felt free to speculate on the basis of mere impression and in the absence of anything close to a statistically valid sample. On the other hand, if, after a horse race, we interview the jockey, it's only because we can't interview the horse. On the subject of M.B.A.'s, I'm one horse who is eager to talk.

Let me begin with money. In all of America, you will not find a group more openly, unashamedly, exuberantly interested in money than the M.B.A.'s at our major business schools. Motives other than the desire to be rich may lure a few people to business school, but those motives are rarely acknowledged. In interviews with corporate recruiters, you can get away with saying that you want to earn a million a year before you're forty, but you can't get away with saying that you're interested in a comfortable job that leaves you a little time for gardening and piano lessons. Greed is the only socially acceptable motive for going to business school. Wealth and power are the only acceptable goals. To confess other motives or announce other goals would be folly, since corporations want winners, and winners keep both eyes, in the phrase of the day, on the bottom line.

I learned the importance of goals from (who else?) the Director of Placement. The subject came up in that speech during orientation week—the speech that introduced me to the distinction between a job and a career. I had not yet recovered from this revelation—indeed, I had barely begun to digest it—when the Director followed it with another. Thinking about a career meant thinking about the long run, he explained, and thinking about the long run meant thinking about "goals and objectives." What were our career goals? "Of course," the Director told us, "all of you want to be CEO's."

"See Eee whats?" I whispered to the classmate on my right, who gave me an odd look and then whispered impatiently, "See Eee Ohhh's." Unenlightened, I listened again to the Director, on stage before his huge, rapt audience: "At Wharton," he was saying, "we prepare the next generation of American business leaders for positions of executive responsibility and authority. As potential chief executive officers, our students are expected. . . ."

Executive responsibility and authority? Was it for this that I had left a perfectly good job teaching adolescents to correct comma errors? What had I gotten into? I didn't want a career. All I wanted was a steady job

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that minimized the amount of time I spent in the company of sixteen-year-olds. "Two years from now," the Director of Placement went on, "we estimate that your average starting salary will be somewhere between $25,000 and $27,000. Of course, many of you will do better. . . ."

This was in 1977. The year before, I had earned $7,500 teaching English to unruly adolescents. Now I was a potential chief executive. A tingle of excitement swept through the audience—a tingle that makes me think of a story I later read about John D. Rockefeller, Sr. In 1865, at the age of twenty-six, Rockefeller completed a deal that gave him control of the largest oil refinery in Cleveland. One day at about this time, Peter Collier and David Horowitz report in *The Rockefellers*, a startled bystander watched as the young magnate, "thinking himself alone in his office, jumped up in the air, clicked his heels together, and repeated to himself, 'I'm bound to be rich! Bound to be rich! *Bound to be rich!*' " Though I never witnessed an actual clicking of heels in my two years at Wharton, I often thought that I heard, especially on occasions when we gathered to receive the blessing of the Director of Placement, a gleeful clicking of mental heels, as the next generation of American business leaders counted their prospective gold.

No one questions the value of the M.B.A. degree to its holders. Even if they are not necessarily bound to be rich, M.B.A.'s are bound to be well-off, especially if their degree comes from one of the top-tier business schools (Harvard, Wharton, Stanford, Chicago, and half-a-dozen others distinguished chiefly by the shrillness of their outcry if anyone omits them from a list like this one).

For graduates of these schools, the M.B.A. degree lives up to its reputation as "the Golden Passport." Here I could give facts and figures, but this year's numbers would quickly grow meaningless. The starting salaries that sounded lavish five years ago now sound modest, and the starting salaries that sounded lavish ten years ago now sound almost meager. One way to factor out inflation is to examine the ratio of starting salaries to tuition. The Harvard Business School has published this analysis of "Return on Tuition Investment":

Year	Tuition	Median Starting Salary	Ratio
1929	$ 500	$ 1,820	3.64
1939	600	1,800	3.00
1949	800	3,600	4.50
1959	1,200	6,600	5.50
1969	2,000	14,000	7.00
1979	5,100	27,500	5.41

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To put these figures in perspective, let me note that the ratio of my starting salary as a high-school teacher to my tuition as a Harvard undergraduate was approximately 1.5.

Besides starting high, the salaries of M.B.A.'s from top-tier schools grow fast. Here are the results of a survey of its reunion classes conducted by the Harvard Business School in 1978:

	Median Alumni Compensation		
Years from Graduation	Starting Income	Current Income	Average Annual Growth
0	$24,000	$ 24,000	—
5	17,600	48,400	22.4%
10	12,500	65,500	18.0
25	4,800	100,300	12.9

By now, of course, if one assumes average annual growth at approximately the rate of inflation, all of these salaries have more than doubled. But the assumption of growth that merely keeps pace with inflation seems absurdly modest. There is nothing to suggest that the salaries of the people in this group would suddenly slow to such a crawl.

If no one questions the value of the M.B.A. degree to the people who obtain it, many question the value of those people to the companies that compete to acquire their services. Especially in recent years, when scapegoats have been needed to blame for the decline of the American industrial machine, M.B.A.'s have provided an irresistible target. "Business school solutions may be part of the U.S. problem," *Time* magazine announced in a long article published in 1981. The group portrait of M.B.A.'s that emerged in the article was, to put it mildly, unflattering:

> They are often inexperienced, arrogant, highly individualistic operators with no patience for team effort.
>
> . . . There's quite a bit of turnover in the early years. Some think they can go to Xerox and become president overnight.
>
> They tend to be more loyal to their personal careers than to any company.

What is more, it seems that these personal shortcomings are compounded by professional ineptitude. "The most fundamental criticism," *Time* reported, "is that the misjudgments and mistakes characteristic of U.S. management as a whole can be blamed at least in part on the managerial methods and ideas of the up-and-coming M.B.A.s." In the words of one manager quoted in the article, "A lot of what is preached at business schools today is absolute rot. It is paper management. It is not the management of hard resources and people. Business schools teach

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that business is nothing but the numbers—and the numbers only for the next quarter."

In the past few years, these criticisms have been echoed in articles in the *New York Times Magazine*, *Newsweek*, *Business Week*, the *Atlantic Monthly*—even *Esquire*. *Dun's Review*, which boasts a readership "concentrated among senior executives of those companies that have a net worth of $1 million or more," entered the debate with an article memorably entitled "Don't Blame the System, Blame the Managers." Professors Robert Hayes and William Abernathy of the Harvard Business School added to these criticisms with an article entitled, almost as memorably, "Managing Our Way to Economic Decline." In the article, an indictment that won them the prestigious McKinsey Award for the best article to appear in the *Harvard Business Review* in 1980, Hayes and Abernathy charged that the responsibility for America's "competitive listlessness" belongs "not just to a set of external conditions but also to the attitudes, preoccupations, and practices of American managers." America's economic troubles are the result of "broad managerial failure—a failure of both vision and leadership."

I find the criticisms of M.B.A.'s that have appeared in these and other articles interesting but not necessarily persuasive. As if to offer living proof of the fanatical devotion to quantitative analysis that typifies graduates of business schools, I would like to see evidence that moves the argument out of the realm of mere assertion. For instance, I would like to see a study that compares, by industry, the performance of companies that have M.B.A.'s in key positions with the performance of companies that do not. Beyond that, I think it only fair to point out that M.B.A.'s are not to blame for the courses that business schools require them to take or for the salaries that companies offer for their services. If inexperienced M.B.A.'s are paid too much, the fault lies with the people who pay them, just as in professional sports, the fault lies with the owners if they pay too much for rookie running backs or flashy slam-dunk artists. As long as the buyer can choose not to buy, nothing costs too much in a market economy. If steak is overpriced, we can buy chicken. If M.B.A.'s are overpriced, we can hire unemployed Ph.D.'s.

On the day I received my M.B.A. I wandered from Vance Hall, the home of the Wharton School, down Locust Walk to College Hall, where I paused to admire the statue of Benjamin Franklin that sits benevolently in a grassy space at the heart of the university. Like many graduates of the University of Pennsylvania, I knew almost nothing about its founder. I had not read Franklin's autobiography, and I had only the dimmest sense of the career as a businessman that preceded his career as an inventor, diplomat, revolutionary, and sage. I had been too busy learning

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about business to read Franklin's "Way to Wealth," "Advice to a Young Tradesman," or "Necessary Hints to Those that Would be Rich." I did not even know that, in *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism,* Max Weber could find no better way to introduce his subject than to quote "Advice to a Young Tradesman" virtually in its entirety.

The debate on the relationship of education to success in business has a long, interesting, and occasionally amusing history, but few of the participants in the present controversy seem to know it. For instance, nothing that has appeared in the past couple of years will come as news to people who remember the fuss stirred by J. Sterling Livingston's "Myth of the Well-Educated Manager," winner of the 1971 McKinsey Award. A professor of business administration at Harvard, Livingston could find little to say on behalf of the training provided by American business schools. One wonders what Livingston's students thought—and what his dean thought—when they read passages such as these:

> How effectively a manager will perform on the job cannot be predicted by the number of degrees he holds, the grades he receives in school, or the formal management education programs he attends. Academic achievement is not a valid yardstick to use in measuring managerial potential. Indeed, if academic achievement is equated with success in business, the well-educated manager is a myth.
>
> Managers are not taught in formal education programs what they most need to know to build up successful careers in management. . . . Much management education is, in fact, miseducation because it arrests or distorts the ability of managerial aspirants to grow as they gain experience.
>
> Preoccupation with problem solving and decision making in formal management education programs tends to distort managerial growth because it overdevelops an individual's analytical ability, but leaves his ability to take action and to get things done underdeveloped. . . . Management graduates . . . suffer their worst trauma in business when they discover that rational solutions to problems are not enough; they must also somehow cope with human emotions in order to get results.

Thus, Livingston anticipates both the current complaint that M.B.A.'s overemphasize short-term financial results to the detriment of long-term growth and the complaint that M.B.A.'s know everything about numbers but nothing about people, products, production, or productivity. But it would be a mistake to think that these criticisms go back only a decade. Here is Thorstein Veblen in *The Higher Learning in America,* published in 1918:

> In America, even in a more pronounced degree than elsewhere, business management centres on financiering and salesmanship; and American commercial schools . . . centre their attention on proficiency in these matters, because

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these are the matters which the common sense of the American business community knows how to value. . . . The besetting infirmity of the American business community . . . is a notable indifference to the economical and mechanically efficient use . . . of equipment and resources, coupled with an equally notable want of insight into the technological needs and possibilities of the industries which they control.

Like Livingston and his successors, but more than half a century earlier, Veblen pounces upon what he sees as an overdevelopment of financial skills and an underdevelopment of the skills needed to promote efficient production. Moreover, in a characteristically anthropological description of American business life, Veblen foreshadows the criticisms of corporate mergers and acquisitions that have filled the business press in recent years: "The typical American businessman watches the industrial process from ambush, with a view to the seizure of any item of value that may be left at loose ends. Business strategy is a strategy of 'watchful waiting,' at the centre of a web; very alert and adroit, but remarkably incompetent in the way of anything that can properly be called 'industrial enterprise.' "

To Veblen, the undergraduate schools of commerce springing up everywhere in the early years of the twentieth century represented the "incursion of pecuniary ideals in academic policy . . . at its broadest and baldest." Bowing to "the laudable practical interest that these young men take in their own prospective material success," Veblen charged that colleges betrayed the higher learning on behalf of training "directed singly to a facile command of the ways and means of private gain." The school of business or commerce struck Veblen as "a cross between a secondary school for bank clerks and travelling salesmen and a subsidiary department of economics." It was not only "the perfect flower of the secularization of the universities" but also "a seminary of business" that had "something of a sacerdotal dignity"—"the appointed keeper of the higher business animus."

Veblen was convinced that the colleges of his time debased themselves to meet the needs of business; he was convinced that those colleges succeeded in preparing their students to function effectively in "this modern, pecuniary scheme of things"; and he was convinced that the "advocacy of the practical in education" had led to a "permeation of the university's everyday activity by the principles of competitive business." His cry of horror does not sound ludicrous to us. What is striking is that it would have been incomprehensible to the average businessman of the nineteenth century.

Until about 1900, conventional wisdom rejected the notion that college offered sound preparation for a career in business. When Cornelius Vanderbilt heard that Lord Palmerston had declared it a pity

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that a man of Vanderbilt's ability lacked the advantages of formal education, Vanderbilt replied, "You tell Lord Palmerston from me that if I had learned education I would not have had time to learn anything else." Vanderbilt's great rival, the Wall Street operator Daniel Drew, agreed with the Commodore: "Book learning is something, but thirteen million dollars is also something, and a mighty sight more."

"It is not book-learning young men need," Elbert Hubbard said in his well-known inspirational lecture "A Message to Garcia" (1899), "but stiffening of the vertebrae which will cause them to be loyal to a trust, to act promptly, concentrate their energies." In an article in 1894 in *Cosmopolitan*, Edward Bok noted that few men with college degrees had made their way to the top of the business community in New York. A decade earlier, Edwin T. Freedley went so far as to say that he doubted that more than half-a-dozen college graduates could be found among the nation's business leaders. "Directly or indirectly," Freedley declared, colleges had "ruined a greater number of their sons than they had ever benefitted."

The great steel magnate Andrew Carnegie disagreed. "Just see," Carnegie wrote in 1893, "wherever we peer into the first tiny springs of the national life, how this true panacea . . . bubbles forth—education, education, education." But Carnegie recommended education in spite of—or, more accurately, on account of—its inappropriateness as a preparation for business: "Liberal education gives a man who really absorbs it higher tastes and aims than the acquisition of wealth . . . ; to find therefore that it is not the best training for business is to prove its claim to a higher domain." In the lower domain, where Carnegie had made his mark, "college education as it exists seems almost fatal to success."

Another self-made giant of the nineteenth century, John D. Rockefeller, Sr., tried to affirm the value of a liberal arts education, but his heart seems not to have been in it. "I think a college education is a splendid thing for a boy; but I would not say that it is absolutely necessary. I hadn't the advantage of a college education; but I had a good mother and an excellent father, and I like to feel that whatever I may have lost through failure to secure a college education I made up through my home training." In the end, the founding benefactor of the University of Chicago seems to rank vocational training above the higher learning: "Better than a college education . . . is the training that a boy gets in the technical schools that have sprung up all over the country. This is an age of specialization. There is an unceasing demand on every hand . . . for men with special, technical knowledge."

Much better than a degree from any college, in the conventional view of the nineteenth century, was a degree from the college of hard knocks. Emerson lauded the "sturdy lad from New Hampshire or Vermont, who

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in turn tries all the professions, and *teams it, farms it, peddles*, keeps a school, preaches, edits a newspaper, goes to Congress, buys a township, and . . . always like a cat falls on his feet." Such a fellow is "worth a hundred of these city dolls" who fiddle away four years in college and fall utterly apart if "not installed in an office within one year afterwards in the cities or suburbs of Boston or New York."

College men might do well enough in the professions, but in business the self-made man was king. If they learned nothing else as they grew up, young Americans of the nineteenth century learned the story of Benjamin Franklin. In our own age, when people know nothing about Franklin except that he flew a kite and looked like Howard Da Silva, it is difficult to grasp what the soapmaker's son from Boston meant to Americans of the last century, but we begin to grasp it if we consider that all poor youths who wished to succeed were urged to follow his example.

In the competition with the college man, the great advantage of the self-made man was experience. As a method of preparing well-rounded men of business, what could surpass an old-fashioned apprenticeship in which a boy began at the bottom, sweeping the floor of the office, and then moved patiently upward on a path that took him through every job in an enterprise—messenger, file clerk, shipping clerk, salesman, buyer, bookkeeper, office manager, general manager? Andrew Carnegie had risen from such a start and delighted in reciting the names of other prominent businessmen who shared his experience. How could a college man ever compete with a man trained in this way? How could he ever make up for the years wasted on the acquisition of superfluous learning? "The prize takers have too many years the start of the graduate," Carnegie declared. "They have entered for the race invariably in their teens—in the most valuable of all the years for learning—from fourteen to twenty; while the college student has been learning a little about the barbarous and petty squabbles of the past . . . the future captain of industry is hotly engaged in the school of experience, obtaining the very knowledge required for his future triumphs."

Only two years after Carnegie wrote this passage, Henry Adams gave the classic statement of the case (as seen in retrospect) against the vanquished college man. In words that have thrilled generations of disappointed devotees of the humanities, Adams tells his tale of "misdirected energy and lost opportunity." "He was not fit," the older Henry says flatly of young Henry. "Thus, at the outset, he was condemned to failure more or less complete in the life awaiting him." "Thus, before he was fifteen years old, he had managed to get himself into a state of moral confusion from which he never escaped." Harvard "taught little, and that little ill. . . . The university produced at great waste of time and money results not worth producing." And so on, for five hundred pages.

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No doubt Adams felt a patrician disdain for a civilization dominated by business and driven by the Dynamo. But to the self-made businessman of the nineteenth century, Adams's hauteur probably would have earned him nothing more than a reputation as a supreme and preposterous embodiment of a type whose day had passed. With his obvious belief that no position below the presidency suited him, how could he have confirmed more dramatically the common image of college men as snoots unwilling to work their way to the top? Can anyone imagine any member of the Adams family beginning his career as an office boy? I can conceive a meeting of Andrew Carnegie and Henry Adams, two formidable gentlemen whose lives spanned nearly the same years. When Adams warned that "a young man has only one chance, and brief time to seize it," and when he confessed himself the victim of a "total misconception of life," I cannot imagine that Carnegie would have disagreed. Nor can I imagine that Adams would have disagreed with Carnegie's assertion, in *The Empire of Business*, that a classical education might fit men for life upon some other planet, but not for life on Earth.

It is useful to recall that, in 1900, only 6.3 percent of America's seventeen-year-olds graduated from high school, and only 2.3 percent of youths eighteen to twenty-four years old were enrolled in college degree-credit programs. Of the prominent businessmen listed in the 1900 edition of *Who's Who in America*, 84 percent had not been educated beyond high school. But times were changing. In an article entitled "The College Man and the Corporate Proposition," published in 1900, the corporation lawyer James B. Dill observed that "the demand today for trained minds, devoted to specific lines of work, has created a demand for college trained men." Traditional apprenticeships could not meet the needs of industrial America. "There is a great deal to be gained," one old-timer complained in 1904, "by the discipline of daily life that comes with drudgery, such as the washing of ink-stands, . . . [but] unfortunately for the boy's own good, the conditions are such at the present that he is not called upon to do that work as was the custom a generation ago." A boy who began by washing out inkstands might acquire the skills to manage an office, but he was not likely to acquire the skills to manage an enterprise like Rockefeller's Standard Oil or Carnegie's U.S. Steel.

In the decades that followed the Civil War—the decades that witnessed the emergence of what used to be called modern America and what we might call the old industrial state—American education changed almost as dramatically as America itself. Many of the changes had to do with the preparation of young people for careers in business.

One important development was the rapid growth of commercial

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"colleges." The number of such schools rose from about two dozen in 1870 to more than five hundred by the end of the century. These schools offered a quick course (usually three months) that provided students with the kind of training previously obtained through office apprenticeships. The major subjects of instruction were business arithmetic, elementary bookkeeping, and penmanship. A man who was to become president of the United States, James A. Garfield, told one group of commercial-school graduates in 1869 that they had received better training for life than the graduates of Harvard, Yale, and Princeton. Henry Adams might have concurred, yet it is clear that the commercial colleges prepared their students to become clerks, not business leaders.

A second important development was the establishment of modern schools of technology. The number of such schools rose from six in 1860 to forty-two at the end of the century. In the view of John D. Rockefeller, technical schools made "the upward course of the earnest, willing-to-work young man straight and clear." Andrew Carnegie announced: "The trained mechanic of the past . . . is now to meet a rival in the scientifically educated youth, who will push him hard—very hard indeed." Carnegie saw in the graduates of technical schools a "scientific attitude of mind" that "renders them receptive of new ideas." "We have begun to realize," he said, "that a knowledge of chemistry . . . is worth a knowledge of all the dead languages that ever were spoken upon the earth, a knowledge of mechanics more useful than all the classical learning that can be crammed into young men at college."

Schools of technology offered sound training for a career in industrial engineering, but this training tended to be too technical to prepare students for careers in general business management. What skills were needed to manage large business enterprises in an industrial nation, and how were these skills to be acquired? Early in 1881 the industrialist Joseph Wharton, a key figure in the history of the Bethlehem Steel Company, spelled out his thoughts on this subject in a letter to the trustees of the University of Pennsylvania:

> In the matter of commercial education there was formerly a system of instruction practiced in the counting-houses of the old-time merchants which may fairly be compared to the system of apprenticeship in trades. Comparatively few examples of this sort of instruction remain, nor is their deficiency made good by the so-called Commercial Colleges.

In an effort "to supply this important deficiency in our present system of education," Wharton gave the University of Pennsylvania $100,000 to endow a school whose purpose would be to provide "young men of inherited intellect, means, and refinement" with "correct instruction in the knowledge and in the arts of modern Finance and Economy, both

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public and private," and thus to prepare those young men for "careers of unselfish legislation and administration."

Wharton's gift led to the establishment of the Wharton School of Finance and Economy, the first collegiate school of business in the United States. The historian of the Wharton School, Steven Sass, makes the point that Joseph Wharton rejected the idea of organizing an independent professional school, analogous to the schools that trained physicians, lawyers, and clergymen: "Instead he turned to the liberal arts college as the place to educate businessmen. . . . Wharton wanted to create a liberally educated class of leaders for American society, and the college was the place to fashion such gentlemen." Wharton himself had said that he wanted "to establish means for imparting a liberal education in all matters concerning Finance and Economy."

As an exercise in historical matchmaking, I like to imagine a debate between Joseph Wharton, that eminent proponent of liberal education, and Thorstein Veblen, whose essay "Vocational Training" I quoted earlier. In that essay Veblen declares that a college of commerce "belongs in the corporation of learning no more than a department of athletics"; he announces that a law school "belongs in the modern university no more than a school of fencing or dancing"; and he denounces practical training in every form as "an endeavour to substitute the pursuit of gain . . . in place of the pursuit of knowledge." In their "thoughtful intervals," Veblen concedes, practical men like Joseph Wharton might avow the ideal of liberal education, "but in workday detail, . . . the workday habit of pecuniary traffic asserts itself," and practical men abandon or betray their ideals in obedience to "the barbarian animus, habitual to the quest of gain."

Veblen may have been right, but he did not express his views in a way calculated to win the affection of university trustees. Benjamin Franklin, founder of the University of Pennsylvania, probably would have sympathized with Joseph Wharton's objectives, shared many of his concerns, and welcomed his gift. In the proposal that led to the establishment of the Pennsylvania Academy (forerunner of the University of Pennsylvania), Franklin balanced the claims of the practical and the impractical:

> As to their STUDIES, it would be well if they could be taught *every Thing* that is useful, and *every Thing* that is ornamental: But Art is long, and their Time is short. It is therefore propos'd that they learn those Things that are likely to be *most useful* and *most ornamental*. Regard being had to the several Professions for which they are intended.

On the side of the useful, Franklin thought that all students should be taught penmanship, "*Arithmetick*, *Accounts*, and some of the first

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Principles of *Geometry and Astronomy*." In addition, all should study "The History of *Commerce*" and "*Mechanicks*, . . . to be inform'd of the Principles of that Art by which weak Men perform such Wonders, Labour is sav'd, Manufactures expedited, &c." Nothing in Wharton's scheme seems foreign to Franklin's conception of an academy. From the aphorist who taught that "A fat Kitchen makes a lean Will," and that "Pride that dines on Vanity sups on Contempt," and that "Fools make Feasts, and wise Men eat them," it is difficult to imagine anything but delight in response to Wharton's intentions, for the industrialist wanted to "let students have . . . what they will of fine college fare, but let them also have potatoes."

Although the Wharton School offered its first courses in 1881, not until 1921 did it inaugurate its M.B.A. program. Meanwhile, in 1908, Harvard had gone officially into the business of training business leaders, and at the graduate level. In part, Harvard's commitment to graduate education in business seems to have been founded upon a characteristic desire to stand above the crowd. In the decade of discussion that led to the establishment of the school, a key document was a letter written in 1907 by A. Lawrence Lowell, then a professor of government and later (1909 to 1933) president of the university:

> I have very little sympathy with the argument we hear so often, that we ought to have a school of such and such at Harvard, because somebody else has it. On the contrary, I think that we had better do things that nobody else does; but we had better do them under the conditions that will be most likely to ensure success. . . . I think we could learn a great deal from the most successful of our professional schools; that is, the Law School. Its success is, I think, due very largely to the fact that it takes men without any previous requirements, save a liberal education in any field, and then teaches them law, not jurisprudence; and it has been coming across my mind that if we are to have a successful school of business we must do the same thing. We must take men without regard to what they have studied in college, and we must teach them business, not political economy.

Harvard's decision to establish a graduate school of business administration was a landmark, no doubt, in the history of what sociologists might call the professionalization of American life. As one of its deans later noted, Harvard was "the first business school to concentrate instruction upon the role of the administrator rather than upon more narrowly technical business matters," and it was "the first to hold that a liberal education was the proper foundation for formal training in business administration." If Harvard had decided to offer business courses to its undergraduates, it is unlikely that young people would be flocking to M.B.A. programs today, and unlikely that anyone would be blaming the decline of American business on graduates of those programs.

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Whereas in 1900 only 16 percent of the businessmen listed in *Who's Who* had gone beyond high school, by 1950 three-quarters of the nation's business leaders were college graduates. College itself may not have taught anything that anyone in business needed to know, but the college degree had become an essential credential. In the view of my parents—the children of immigrants and members of a generation in which education stopped, in my family, with graduation from high school—the day that I was admitted to college was the day that our family arrived in America for good. None of us had any notion that, by the time I graduated in 1972, a college degree in the liberal arts would mean little more than a degree from high school.

With the decline in the market value of the bachelor of arts degree has come, inevitably, a surge in the demand for degrees that make a difference in the marketplace. The Wharton School awarded approximately 500 M.B.A. degrees between the founding of its M.B.A. program in 1921 and the start of World War II; now it awards 500 annually. The number of M.B.A. programs in the country grew from fewer than 50 in 1950 to nearly 500 in 1980; the annual number of M.B.A. graduates grew from 4,300 in 1950 to almost 60,000 in 1980; and the annual number of business degrees awarded at all levels grew from 75,000 in 1950 to 220,000 in 1980.

It is easy to see what has happened. Year after year, while university presidents declare their allegiance to non-utilitarian values, economic forces grind away, crushing everything that fails the test of utility. Baby booms come and go, industries appear and depart, cities expand and contract, regions prosper and languish, nations rise and fall, civilizations thrive and decline, and universities yield to the temptation to convert themselves into trade schools. The demand of students for a degree that will matter in the marketplace sets off a stampede to develop programs that provide marketable skills or, at the least, a marketable credential.

The laws of supply and demand figure to dampen the prospects of M.B.A. graduates in the next decade or so, though probably not as dramatically as they have dampened the prospects of liberal arts graduates in the past decade. Already the explosion in the number of M.B.A. programs has generated discussion about the devaluation of the degree. "Entry barriers . . . have been low," the dean of the Harvard Business School commented icily as he surveyed the scene in 1980. "Quality at the margin has fallen measurably." He went on to predict "some significant decline in the numbers of college- and graduate-level enrollments in business."

The diversity that has come to exist in the past twenty-five years makes it almost as difficult to generalize about M.B.A. programs and students as it is to generalize about colleges and college students.

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Depending on the school that awards the degree, the Golden Passport may be silver or bronze, though probably not lead. An M.B.A. degree from the University of Central Florida or from East Carolina University generally carries less weight than an M.B.A. from Harvard or Wharton. On the other hand, an M.B.A. from East Carolina may carry more weight than my own B.A. in English from Harvard. Moreover, whereas an employer who is looking for executive polish may find an ample supply at the top-tier schools, an employer who is looking for drive—"fire in the belly," as people in business say—may do better at schools that have drawn scrappier students. (My apologies to the scrappy M.B.A.'s of Harvard and Wharton and to the polished M.B.A.'s of East Carolina and Central Florida.)

If you believe their own publicity, the difference between the top-tier schools and the others is the difference between schools that train chiefs and schools that train Indians. Harvard goes so far as to devote half-a-dozen pages in every issue of its alumni magazine to a list of graduates whose most recent promotions were announced in the "Who's News" column in the *Wall Street Journal*. In general, the top-tier schools measure their success by the salaries that their graduates earn, by the businesses that their graduates own or run, and by the number of graduates in key positions in companies in the *Fortune* 500.

The training for business leadership that ostensibly takes place at the top-tier schools does not have much to do with the curriculum, which varies little from the curriculum at less prestigious schools. The requirements for an M.B.A. at Wharton are typical. In addition to four courses in an area of specialization, every student must survive a "comprehensive introduction to the theoretical foundations of management"—an introduction that includes accounting, finance, marketing, microeconomics, macroeconomics, organizational behavior, management decision analysis, statistics, organizational policy and planning, calculus, and computer programming. (How did anyone ever get the idea that this training produces managers who overemphasize quantitative techniques?)

It's not only what we teach, business-school representatives say when asked how they prepare business leaders, it's how we teach it. Harvard is eloquent on the subject of its commitment to the case method—a method of instruction that focuses upon written cases based on real business situations. The case method "obliges the students to confront unruly, intractable reality," Harvard claims, and the case itself "reflects the infuriating limitations of real situations: information is incomplete, objectives are in conflict, needs and resources are out of balance." By bringing into the classroom "some of the vital human dimensions of the real world of business," the case method "helps convert an *aptitude* for management to a *capacity* for management."

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Though Harvard goes the farthest, all business schools rely to some extent on cases, and many M.B.A. graduates owe to the case method the development of crucial skills: the wit to bluff when asked to express an opinion on a subject or a situation that baffles them, the shrewdness to keep silent until exactly the moment when they will gain the most credit for speaking, the power to demolish an opponent when demolition will advance their careers, and the agility to defend themselves against the attacks of colleagues who have learned the same tricks and techniques in their own years at business school. As Harvard says in one of the publications it sends to prospective students, "The guided discussion of the case partially simulates the emotional atmosphere in which managers must operate."

In addition to everything they learn in class, M.B.A. students learn many lessons outside the classroom. Though their other skills may be shaky, the young men and women who graduate from our best business schools know how to prepare a resumé, how to dress, how to shine their shoes, how to comb their hair, and how to handle themselves in job interviews. You will not catch them wearing corduroy suits or skirts slit to mid-thigh. All of them appreciate the importance of a handsome attaché case. Nearly every M.B.A. is also an M.M.D.—Master of Managerial Deportment.

Students at top-tier business schools acquire more, however, than a set of skills and a set of manners. They acquire a set of expectations. The inside track to a comfortable job in middle management may be all that many students want out of business school, but it is not all that business school wants out of them. In the literature sent to students who inquire about its programs, Wharton declares modestly that its role is "to develop leaders who will guide the industrial, financial, not-for-profit and government institutions in this country and abroad." Harvard describes itself as a school "for individuals who want to prepare themselves for business leadership." Stanford says that it admits only students "whose records indicate aptitude, interest, and ability for administrative leadership."

The assumption that students are bound for executive glory heightens the atmosphere at top-tier schools in a way that is not easily described. People cannot listen to two years of talk about business leadership without reexamining their own capacities and prospects. Even a slow fellow like me, with his dreams of a middling job in middle management, looks in the mirror one day and wonders whether he is meant, after all, for some grand managerial destiny—a big job earning big bucks.

During most of my time at business school, however, I was not dreaming; I was working. When I entered Wharton, five years had

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passed since I had taken an examination of any kind, and eight years since I had taken an examination in a quantitative discipline. Having majored in English as an undergraduate, I was accustomed to tests that rewarded verbal facility. I was also proud: I wanted to do well, and though I would not have admitted it at the time, I expected to do extremely well—an expectation that testifies yet again, as if further testimony were needed, to the remarkable innocence that I brought to the whole business.

To forestall accusations of false modesty, let me say that I did do well at Wharton, but I did not do well without a struggle, and I did not do as well as I had imagined I might. The quantity and difficulty of the technical material that dominated the curriculum made me work harder than I had ever worked before. Like many students in law school and medical school, I discovered that intellectual activity could be difficult without being interesting. My thoughts of mastering the material quickly gave way to a constant, anxious scramble to get by.

On the whole, I suspect that I took the academic side of business school too seriously. My classmates who came to Wharton with previous experience in business (as opposed to experience in a high-school classroom) seemed more relaxed. Needless to say, perhaps, I had not read J. Sterling Livingston's "Myth of the Well-Educated Manager," with its fierce assault on the idea that success in business school relates in any way to success in business.

The insecurity bred by my inability to distinguish myself was compounded by the shock of my first encounter with M.B.A. candidates who had devoted their undergraduate years to technical specialties. In my first week at Wharton, I found myself assigned to a project team whose other members had taken their undergraduate degrees in applied mathematics and computer sciences at M.I.T. Our task was to use linear programming techniques to develop a comprehensive plan for a regional blood-banking system. My role in the group quickly became apparent: I made sure that the M.I.T. graduates were kept well-fueled with coffee, and when it came time to type our report, I typed it. I have rarely felt so useless.

Not until the last phase of the project did I realize that my uselessness was not absolute. My colleagues had drafted a report in the language that comes naturally to computer scientists—a language that I felt free to translate into English when I typed our final paper. In addition to writing this paper, our group was required to make an oral presentation to the class. Here I made the mistake of suggesting that my colleagues ought to make the presentation because they had done the work and, besides, only they could adequately explain their assumptions, their methodology, and their conclusions. What was wrong was my

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assumption that anyone could stand in front of a group and talk. As preparation for public speaking, I discovered, one week of teaching in a high school far surpasses four years of undergraduate work in applied mathematics and computer sciences. This discovery pleased me, but I could not escape the depressing truth that I had contributed nothing to the solution of the problem that our group had been asked to solve. The people who solved problems were worth more, I felt, than the people who packaged their solutions. I wanted to be a problem-solver, but it seemed that I could not be anything but a solution-packager.

In my innocence, I had supposed that all M.B.A's are equal. Now I realized that some are more equal than others. Why should IBM want me if they could hire an M.B.A. with an undergraduate degree in computer sciences or applied mathematics? Why should Du Pont want me if they could hire an M.B.A. with an undergraduate degree in chemical engineering? Why should Wall Street want me if they could hire an M.B.A. with a major in finance on top of an undergraduate degree in accounting?

These questions worried me into developing, in my first semester at Wharton, an obsession with technical skills. The Director of Placement might tell me that I had come to Wharton to start a career, but I still wanted to get a job. The school might encourage me to think of myself as a chief, but I still wanted to make sure that I could fill a role as an Indian. I ought to have recognized that I could not compete with the technical wizards on their own ground. Instead, convinced that I needed a specialty, I conceived the curious idea of becoming an accountant.

This desperate effort was spurred by attitudes and anxieties that frequently afflict M.B.A. students with undergraduate degrees in the liberal arts. I never achieved the proficiency in accounting that I sought, but I did manage to fool myself into thinking that I was making good use of my time. I understood accounting and appreciated its purposes. Beyond that, I *liked* accounting. This may seem remarkable, but it must be remembered that, as an undergraduate, I had spent hundreds of happy hours analyzing literary texts. The qualities that we value in one kind of literary critic—patience, persistence, precise attention to detail—are exactly the qualities that matter in an accountant. Even honesty and integrity matter. Though professors of English may prefer not to believe it, a careful reading of financial statements is not so different from a careful reading of a poem or story.

In May 1979, after two dreary, demanding years, I received my M.B.A. Despite my efforts to acquire technical skills, I was hired as a general manager. No doubt many of my classmates have risen to positions of executive responsibility and authority far more formidable than mine, and no doubt many of them make more frequent or more effective use of skills that they acquired at Wharton. I myself find that I

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use no quantitative skills that I had not mastered by the age of twelve, and I find that what helps me the most in my job is the ability to express myself—an ability that I brought to business school and managed somehow to preserve.

Out of all I gained from business school, it seems to me that what remains after five years is a credential that matters to prospective employers, a generalist's familiarity with a wide range of business specialties, a working knowledge of the jargon that people in business use, and a vast increase in my powers of personal salesmanship. I went to business school to acquire marketable skills, and what I chiefly acquired was the ability to market myself. No one who has received an M.B.A. from a school like Wharton need fear the rebuke that is flung in the face of Willy Loman in *Death of a Salesman:* "The only thing you got in this world is what you can sell. And the funny thing is that you're a salesman, and you don't know that."

Though business school trains professional managers, I learned nothing to put the profession in perspective until long after I graduated, when I began to be curious about the history of American business, the role of business in American life, the relation of education to success in business, and the history of American business education. Now, sometimes, in my dreams, I imagine an extraordinary party. Benjamin Franklin is there, along with Joseph Wharton, Henry Adams, Henry James, Thorstein Veblen, John D. Rockefeller, Cornelius Vanderbilt, Daniel Drew, Andrew Carnegie, and many, many more. The din is terrific. Calvin Coolidge is there to announce that the business of America is business; William James is there to denounce the bitch-goddess Success; Louis Rukeyser is there to explain how to get rich in the stock market; and Melville's Bartleby is there to say that he, for one, would prefer not to.

After a while, the babble upsets my nerves, and I slip into a little room across the hall. There, on a red velvet sofa, someone has left a copy of the Sunday *New York Times*, and I begin to skim the job advertisements in the business section. Job after job requires specialized skills that I do not possess. I read ad after ad, page after page, looking for a job I can do. Nothing. Zero. Zip. Then it stares me in the face:

CEO

Who is better qualified?

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Photograph

Father and Grandfather Fishing the Pier at Michigan City

Brian O'Neill

The pier fades away with men
who've heard the perch are in.
You cradle a pole
between your boots.
Grandfather coils above you
where deep water begins
his legs cocked like a frog.
Five years home from the war,
you will never lose the feeling
of living someone else's life,
of making that life worth the cost.
You wear your hat down to your eyes
like Humphrey Bogart
in *Treasure of the Sierra Madre.*
Half-grinning in the glare of water
you look almost happy, dug in,
housed, holding on.
Your father-in-law recites history
when the perch are out.
Unable to read, angry all his life,
he knows what he knows, hates Roosevelt,
imitates his voice promising
no dead Americans.
After fifty years in Indiana

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he still speaks with an accent
relentlessly Italian in all things.
You smoke a cigarette
to the butt, measure time.
You'd rather be inside thinking
of how you will build your home.
But the perch come and the men
haul them back by the bucket.
Done with killing for good,
you wince at cars
backfiring a mile away
and run in a low crouch
when milk cartons explode
in trash fires.
Under a dim light at dawn
you jerk a stiff whiskey down
as grandfather guts the perch.

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A Drink of Water

JOHN R. REED

Scarcely thinking, I leave my chair and saunter
to the kitchen and run the faucet until
the water's cool and fill a glass and drink.
Only then my eyes hook on the lake-blue
sky, and suddenly my mind cloudbursts back
to where I am, not under Africa's yellow
heaven heavy with dust, people scattered
like windfall fruit all around, old men thin
as forks too weak to brush away the thirsty
flies wolfing each bead of sweat, mothers
without a jangling trinket to barter for drink,
their swollen babies vainly tugging breasts
that hang down hopeless as torn pockets,
while I
am where the states dangle like piglets from
the Great Lakes' swollen tits, sucking as though
their dam could never dry out like a stalk
of autumn corn. Moments ago, my mind
was elsewhere, musing that hope is the salty meat
we chew to breed our quenchless thirst for justice
or love, high thoughts I have the leisure for
because I take my water from a tap
easily as any lord may give a reprieve
while those with a different revelation suck
the dry straws of their awful clarity.

JOHN R. REED's poems have appeared in the *Paris Review*, *Sewanee Review*, *Little Magazine*, and other journals.

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The Radical Comedians

Inside *Partisan Review*

SIDNEY HOOK

OF THE MAKING OF MYTHS there is no end. One of the great current myths concerns the role of the *Partisan Review* in effecting changes in the temper of cultural and political opinions in radical intellectual groups and in the larger circles of the academy and nation. The truth is that *Partisan Review* caught up with cultural and political tendencies and movements that developed independently of the changes and turns in the thinking of its editors, of whom William Phillips, Philip Rahv, and Dwight Macdonald were the most important until Macdonald was maneuvered out of his editorial post in 1943.

The *Partisan Review* has profited from the recurrent need of young literary radicals to find a tradition from which to draw sustenance and encouragement. The legend that has grown up about the political influence of *Partisan Review* has to some extent been fostered by its editors and some early contributors who probably have themselves been surprised at the way the legend has taken hold of the literary mind. They have naturally ended up firmly convinced it was so. More difficult to explain is the extent to which some sociologists and historians of ideas have been taken in by this myth, which cannot survive a careful analysis of the record.

Despite their mantle of radical rhetoric, the editors of the *Partisan Review* were not serious revolutionists at all. If seriousness is measured by concern with specific social problems, they were really not serious about politics. They invested no energy and risked no safety in the recognized revolutionary movements of the time. They called themselves socialist and on occasion Communist, but the terms had no real content in their minds, except that they were against things as they were, even if they didn't know too much *what* they were, and were unaware of how they were changing. The chief editors, after Dwight Macdonald's

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brief sojourn, read no economics or sociology or philosophy but mainly literary criticism, especially the literary quarterlies, chiefly from the United States and England since, except for some French, they had little linguistic capacity. Because they kept their independence of the various political groupings, they profited from the disillusionment of politically more serious individuals who used *Partisan Review*'s pages to reach a wider audience. Their chief contribution, for which they deserve commendation, is that they provided a forum for non-sectarian writing during a highly sectarian period in intellectual political life, but this is a far cry from what they are being given credit for by contemporary scholars, who have no firsthand experience of the crucial years of the magazine's origin and growth.

My own relationship to the magazine was mediated through William Phillips, who, although a graduate student in English, had taken a course or two in philosophy with me at New York University and whom, together with Rahv, I subsequently met at some public meetings of the John Reed Club. Under the name of Wallace Phelps he reviewed books in the official monthly organ of the Communist party, although I doubt whether formally he was ever a dues-paying member. There was more political piety than doctrinal orthodoxy in Phillips's Marxist faith at the time, since he also wrote an article for the *Symposium* during this period. After my break as a fellow traveler of the Communists, I lost sight of him but desultorily followed his career as a co-editor, with Philip Rahv, of *Partisan Review*, then the official organ of the John Reed Club. I met him again and, through him, Rahv, shortly after the first Moscow Trial when *Partisan Review* was in a state of suspended animation. At the time both Phillips and Rahv were uneasy about Party control of radical intellectual and cultural life and rather unhappy about the revelations concerning the literary purges in the Soviet Union that were reported in Max Eastman's *Artists in Uniform* and elsewhere. They seemed to have accepted the Moscow Trials on their face but had no defense against my vehement criticisms of the evidence and my denunciation of Stalin's policies both foreign and domestic. Before long, probably as much because of the increasing doubts of some of their other friends as because of my arguments, they changed their views about the Moscow Trials.

When, together with Dwight Macdonald, Phillips and Rahv decided to launch the *Partisan Review* on a new course as an organ of an independent revolutionary outlook, they invited me to their deliberations as a kind of political guide. Phillips and Rahv were quite fearful of attacking the Communist party openly, partly because of the onus of having appropriated the name of the official organ of the John Reed Club, for which they were viciously attacked, and partly because they

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did not want to be accused of making common cause with "an open enemy of the party" like myself, which, as they explained, would be "needlessly provocative." Before long, however, Phillips and Rahv realized they were beyond the Communist political pale. Under the influence of Dwight Macdonald, whose natural exuberance and absence of any inhibitions from past political associations expressed themselves in an engaging and unembarrassed frankness, they took political and literary positions openly critical of the Communist party.

When the Second World War broke out, all the editors of *Partisan Review* took the line that it was an imperialist war, which was the view of every radical group in the United States. When I abandoned that position in 1940, I found myself in strong disagreement with the editors, especially with Dwight Macdonald, who by that time had joined the Trotskyists and was fanatical against any involvement of the United States, however indirect, in war. The arguments were hot and furious; the first to agree with me was William Phillips, who, when he was not under emotional constraints, was eminently levelheaded and commonsensical. Rahv held out longer but ultimately accepted my view about the necessity of United States involvement in the war. Macdonald could not be moved an iota. Even after he officially broke with the Trotskyist groups, he held unalterably to the position that support of the struggle against Hitler under the aegis of Roosevelt and Churchill would inevitably result in fascism at home, and that, therefore, "all support of whatever kind must be withheld from Roosevelt and Churchill." He further argued that only a revolutionary socialist government in the United States and England could lead to the military defeat of Hitler and German fascism, and denied that such revolutionary activities, even in the midst of war, would open the gates to Hitler. Macdonald held these views to the bitter end—even after Pearl Harbor and in the face of subsequent developments.

It was quite clear that *Partisan Review* could not function properly unless the editors reached some agreement on the war issue. An agreement to disagree was impractical, for the issue would arise again and again when it came to planning or accepting articles and book reviews. Phillips and Rahv were resolved to get Macdonald off the magazine since he was submitting articles that were more appropriate for the *New International,* the official monthly organ of the Trotskyist Socialist Workers Party. He was resolved to stay, and since one of his friends, George Morris, was the chief financial supporter of the magazine, he assumed that when that support ceased, he would take it over. Not expecting Phillips and Rahv to raise the necessary funds, he offered to withdraw if they found another patron. I no longer recall the stratagem that Phillips and Rahv used to achieve their purpose, but I distinctly

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recall their jubilation in having taken Macdonald in by assuring him that they had secured new backing long before it was in sight. When financial backing did come, it came *after* Macdonald had left, and the source of it was never clear. Although I regarded Macdonald's position on the war as a kind of sectarian insanity, it was painful to observe how his naiveté and trustfulness were taken advantage of by Phillips and Rahv. Delmore Schwartz, who had become one of the editors by then, had a somewhat ambiguous position on the war. I got the impression at the time that he valued his association with *Partisan Review* more than he did his qualified agreement with Macdonald.

I never thought much of the intellectual sophistication of the editors of *Partisan Review*, and whatever alliances we entered into were ones of convenience. Their conception of American culture was very narrow. It was almost entirely literary and aesthetic, with a political stance reactive against the excesses of Stalinism but lacking a sense of the important problems created by the crisis of Marxism, the bankruptcy and criminality of Leninism and Stalinism, and the development of the New Deal and the welfare state. The editors regarded the basic questions of education, law, philosophy, economics, and social thought as academic and boring. They would publish my articles on these themes for their critical political content, but I could not induce them to make room for the analysis of concrete problems. They would plead that they were revolutionists not concerned with such superficial, quotidian questions like job and pension plans, labor legislation, unemployment insurance, or educational reform. With the exception of Dwight Macdonald, they were revolutionists who, for all their criticism of reformism, never took risks, never joined a picket line, did not get involved in any kind of political life, never reached out to trade-union members, or made attempt to win over the general public to the revolutionary cause through contributions to the mass media. Had there been any genuine revolutionary outbreak, they would probably have gone into hiding until it was all over. Their radicalism was subjectively sincere, but it was essentially parasitic. Their undoubted merit was that they provided an opportunity for gifted young men and women, many of whom did not share their political views, to develop modernist literary themes in the pages of *Partisan Review*. They fancied themselves enlightened cultural commissars of a socialist culture struggling to be born. Because of his reputation, their culture hero was Edmund Wilson, who kept his distance from them and was wont to refer contemptuously to the *Partisansky Review*.

On occasion they would darkly refer to Wilson's anti-Semitism to account for his obvious distaste for the editors, despite his occasional contributions, but they never really believed it. They were not above making the charge of unconscious anti-Semitism as a kind of bullying

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weapon in their arguments with Macdonald—on whom it had a quieting effect that was completely out of character—despite the absence of even a tincture of such a sentiment in anything he said or wrote. But because it was such an easy charge to make in the troubled years when the airwaves were carrying accusations that the Jews were trying to embroil the United States in war against Nazi Germany, even Macdonald would pick and choose his words carefully so as not to give offense to the cultivated sensibilities of his fellow editors, who would joke about the matter in my presence. "The only time we can shut him up," I was once told, "is when we imply that his position is anti-Semitic."

In the early years, the editors of *Partisan Review* differed from Edmund Wilson in that their cultural orientation was almost exclusively European. They were largely ignorant of or indifferent to American traditions, the great figures of American literature, American history and thought. It was European writers who concerned them most. At first, they scoffed at Faulkner and regarded Henry James as a great European writer. Although this emphasis gradually changed, until the time I lost contact with the editors, I never sensed that they were as interested in interpreting American culture as they were in playing the role of spokesmen to provincial Americans for modern European culture in its varied manifestations. America was powerful and that was why its politics had to be condemned, but culturally it was hopelessly parochial.

The editors kept abreast of European literary developments, but about all else they were dependent upon what their contributors provided. With the exception of William Barrett, who joined the editorial staff after World War II but played a very passive role in the magazine's direction, the editors were acquainted with the thought of figures like Toynbee, Popper, Niebuhr, Tillich, even Harold Laski, only at second hand, usually through critical notices I wrote about them. The series of articles by John Dewey, Ernest Nagel, and me on "The New Failure of Nerve" was my idea.

William Phillips was a central figure but not the most influential editor at *Partisan Review* during these years—central in that the burden of the technical work fell on him as well as the responsibility of finding the money to pay for the magazine and supplying the social life for a succession of angels over the years. Timid, contained, always under tension, Phillips developed an emotional dependence on Philip Rahv from which he sought in vain to liberate himself for many years. He finally succeeded in doing so when Rahv left New York and Phillips, along with Richard Poirier, a professor at Rutgers, took over the magazine. In Rahv's presence he was overshadowed, often bullied, and he never received the proper acknowledgment for his sacrificial and, in the early years, sometimes heroic Jimmy Higgins labors. Later, many of

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these chores were taken over by a succession of admiring females, never in short supply, who felt privileged to serve the *Partisan Review* and its editors in various capacities. At no time was Phillips ever relieved of the responsibility of raising the money for the magazine. Despite this, Rahv made everyone understand, more often by gesture and grimace than in so many words, that Phillips was a liability. Phillips was fumingly aware of this. Actually, Phillips had a more sensitive intelligence than Rahv, was much better informed about American culture, and was much more responsive to the thoughts and feelings of others. But Rahv had more force of character, a stubborn presence that bore down on Phillips, and an imperious way that would sweep aside Phillips's objections to his decisions regardless of their weight. Phillips was at his best in Rahv's absence, but for many years he could not stay away from him for long.

Philip Rahv was primarily a political man. In the years I knew him he never expressed his appreciation for, no less delight in, the intrinsic properties of things. He never gave signs of enjoying an argument for its own sake, a story or poem or work of art for its form or craftsmanship, a person for his character or personality. Everything was judged for its effect or evaluated in its bearing on something in train at the moment—an editorial project, an article or author to be corralled or targeted for a future issue. I never got the sense that he had any real love of literature. He was never interested in individuals who could not be of some possible use to him or his projects, and he was always concerned with the reputations of those he got to know. Although, until he became an anti anti-Communist, our political judgments were rarely at variance for long, we never got along with each other to the point that we could share confidences. He always regarded me as someone biased in Willliam Phillips's favor, and he would almost invariably retort to any criticisms I made of the magazine, of what was published or unpublished, by claiming it was no fault or responsibility of his. He would say: "Don't believe everything William tells you about me," although in fact William, out of loyalty to him, said very little besides giving the impression that, like an abused wife, he was a victim of Rahv's imperiousness. Rahv was very keen about publishing anything critical or polemical by me, and his satisfaction with these pieces seemed to me to be disproportionate to their merits. In general, Rahv was more eager to expose or destroy reputations than to build them up. Since pretensions to talent were more plentiful than genuine achievement, there was always a good supply of targets at hand. Besides, critical articles and reviews are more interesting as a rule than purely expository or interpretive ones.

Rahv's political positions were always extreme yet at the same time safe. By this I mean that they were not nuanced, but their timing was

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such that he never ran any risks: he always hedged them. By the time he came out in support of the war against Hitler, the tide of intellectual opinion had begun to shift. But to play safe and hold on to the notion that he was still a revolutionary Marxist, Rahv concluded one of his discussions with the statement: "In a sense this war, even if it accomplishes the destruction of fascism, is not yet *our* war." But if it is not yet *his* war, and if the destruction of fascism is not enough to make it his war, by what right could he call on others to support it? When the war was over and before the cold war had really set in, Rahv was the hottest of cold warriors. So extreme was his support of the American position that, apropos of some rather mild criticism of the growing realism of the American government vis-à-vis the Soviet regime by the editors of the *New Republic* and the *Nation* in 1946, he denounced them in unmeasured terms as "Fifth Columnists" of the Soviet Union. The language was as extreme as any Senator McCarthy was to use a few years later. During the fifties, he was as vehemently anti-Communist as any of the writers he later chided for throwing out Leninism with the Stalinist bathwater. But at the same time he was implying that other anti-Communists were playing the game of the American Establishment.

One of my most disagreeable memories of Rahv dates back to the days when we were still political allies. There was no question among anyone familiar with the evidence that Julius and Ethel Rosenberg were guilty of espionage. But since the war was over, the prevalent feeling, even more widespread than the conviction of their guilt, was that their death sentence should be commuted. The only person I met on both sides of the Atlantic who disagreed about this was Rahv. He was vehement on the subject. "If their sentence is commuted," he asserted, "the Rosenbergs will become the subject of a worldwide campaign directed against the U.S. to 'free the Rosenbergs.' Better to execute them now!" I am confident that I was not the only person to whom Rahv communicated his views on the Rosenberg case. He would run off at the mouth freely about his feelings. But he was very careful not to publish his position or leave a permanent record of what he believed about it, and why.

I was taken aback to learn subsequently, when Rahv became a fervent anti anti-Communist, that in his litany of infamies of the cold warriors he included their alleged failure to protest the execution of the Rosenbergs. Even the Executive Committee of the Congress for Cultural Freedom, whose members Rahv particularly detested, had intervened with President Eisenhower to commute the Rosenbergs' sentence. So had the Pope. In the mid or late fifties, when *Partisan Review* ran a symposium on the cold war, Rahv sent the galleys of my contribution to another participant who, without naming me, criticized the chief points I

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had made. When I taxed Rahv with this underhanded violation of the presuppositions of honest exchange, he at first sought to brazen it out by a denial, and then made some contemptuous reference to the other participant as an obtuse doctrinaire fanatic. He betrayed us both. I don't remember his saying a good word about anyone connected with *Partisan Review* in the absence of the person, with the exception of Mary McCarthy when she was living with him. He even warned me once—when she showed an undue interest in a philosophical conversation with me—to keep my distance from her lest I end up stripped and skewered in one of her stories. But this may have been after she left him for Edmund Wilson.

Like all of us in those years, Rahv considered himself a Marxist, and in the broad sense of the word he was. But his knowledge of Marx and the Marxist tradition was very spotty. I was never convinced that he studied or even carefully read *Capital*. He was an autodidact who had imbibed his Marxism via Lenin, the Russian Revolution, and a short term in the Young Communist League. He knew little and cared less about the evolution of the American economy. It was enough for him that Lenin had established that there was no way out for capitalism. He dismissed as unimportant Dwight Macdonald's brilliant characterizations of the New Deal. For the truth was already in. It would be more accurate to call Rahv a Leninist than a Marxist.

Rahv was a Leninist, however, in method, not in personal dedication. He was an organizational intriguer for whom the revolutionary allegiance was a vantage point from which to exercise influence on impressionable young writers who wanted to be with the grain of history. In 1967, although careful not to become engaged with the excesses of the wild New Left, he sought to win some prestige among them with an attack on *Commentary* magazine, distinguishing his anti-Stalinism from the anti-Communism of its contributors, claiming that he was still a Marxist and Leninist. By that time, to be a "Marxist" was as ambiguous an epithet of identification as to be a "Christian." To be a Leninist was tantamount to surrendering any kind of belief in democratic socialism.

Of an entirely different kidney from Phillips and Rahv was Dwight Macdonald. He was a first-rate journalist with a lively style and decent instincts in a bohemian setting. There was a very strong streak of exhibitionism in his behavior. Because of his ingrained honesty, he was very likable even when he sported pretensions to be a heavy thinker. This honesty, this forthrightness, puzzled and sometimes annoyed Rahv, who always played his cards close to his chest. Macdonald had literary aspirations and was diverted from them by his association with Phillips and Rahv. He was a sharp and clever critic of popular American culture, and if he hadn't become involved in revolutionary politics, he might

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have been as good as Mencken, possibly better, because although his manners and words were often brusque and cutting, at heart he was kind. His imaginative powers were more highly developed than those of Mencken: the stories of mass misery and persecution that left Mencken stonily unmoved aroused Macdonald's sympathy. Once he became interested in politics, his very wholeheartedness and sincerity carried him into the thick of things, which in due course led to his joining the Trotskyist Socialist Workers Party that had been born of the fusion of the Communist League of America and the American Workers Party. (In late 1933 together with A. J. Muste, J. B. S. Hardman, James Burnham, Gerry Allard, head of the Illinois Progressive Mine Workers Union, and others, I helped found the American Workers Party in the hope of developing an indigenous American Marxist movement based on American revolutionary traditions. The fusion some years later with the CLA turned out to be a disaster. Like true Leninists, it took over the new organization.)

In subsequent years, after he dropped out of the organized revolutionary movement, Dwight Macdonald made fun of himself and his political associates, writing feverish memoranda on all the troubled areas of the world as if they were the general staff of the world revolution. The truth was that he and his political associates in the Trotskyist movement, as distinct from the radical comedians who were his co-editors at the *Partisan Review*, were deadly serious. They really did conceive of themselves as the general staff of the world revolution; and because of their link with Leon Trotsky, the Kremlin considered them as the general staff of the counterrevolution. Many of them suffered grievously for that, besides enduring foolish and needless prosecution in the United States under the Smith Act.

Macdonald never got along with the professional revolutionists of the Socialist Workers Party, not because he lacked fervor but because he lacked discipline. He would blurt things out—out of season and to the wrong people. Judging by what I learned from his fellow members, with whom I had episodic nonpolitical relations, I believe the basic trouble was that he could not adapt himself to the morals of a Leninist Party. He never understood or accepted the theory of democratic centralism; he felt that his views as well as those of other dissidents were entitled to as much of a hearing as those of the leadership; and he objected to the factionalism of those who denounced factions. For awhile he was a devoted follower of James Burnham, whose style of thinking and writing he admired until Burnham repudiated not only Trotskyism but Leninism and much of Marxism. Dwight Macdonald's intellectual vanity suffered at the hands of his fellow professional revolutionists, who regarded him as a literary journeyman rather than as a schooled Marxist capable of coming to grips with the nature of the Soviet state under Stalin. He

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joined the Shachtman-Burnham faction, which contested Trotsky's view that the Soviet Union was still a workers' state, despite Stalin's rule of absolute terror over the working class. Unfortunately, Macdonald, who had criticized Trotsky, ran afoul of one of Trotsky's devastating asides. In a letter to one of the members of the loyalist Cannon group, Trotsky had written apropos of Macdonald: "Everyone has a natural right to be stupid, but beyond a certain point it becomes an intolerable privilege." This was leaked not only to the members of the Socialist Workers Party but to sympathizers outside. Macdonald was furious—so furious that, according to C. W. James, who collected funds among the radical public to provide additional security for Trotsky's defense after the first attempt to assassinate him had miscarried, Macdonald refused to contribute a penny. He turned down James's request with a ferociously uttered, "——— Trotsky!"

Pure in heart Dwight Macdonald may have been, but if the consequences of action or inaction are relevant to politics, he must also be declared absolutely irresponsible—a charge that always left his withers unwrung. This became apparent not only during the American involvement in Vietnam, although he knew the nature of the Communist enemy, but also in 1968 at the time of the Columbia student revolt, which he cheered on in reckless disregard of the facts and truths of the case.

Delmore Schwartz was too young to be one of the original editors of *Partisan Review*, but he replaced Dwight Macdonald after the latter was maneuvered out in 1943. So far as I know he played no active role in determining policy, although he was quite voluble about it. He was poetry editor of *Partisan Review* and, because of his early success, served as more of an adornment to the magazine than as a working co-editor. It is only with sadness that one can recall his tragic and tortured life.

Before he won fame as a poet and critic, Delmore Schwartz was a student of mine at New York University. But I got to know Delmore best, not in the classroom or during office hours, to which he never came, but in walks to the subway or to restaurants or publishers' offices. He would wait for me to emerge from the north exit of the Main Building at Washington Square three or four days each week. Sometimes I would prolong my walk with him if my appointment was not urgent and our conversation interesting. We talked of various things, and although at the time I was unaware of his poetic gifts, I was impressed by his sensitivity and the catholicity of his interests. What I remember most vividly was his deep concern with the Aquinate proofs of the existence of God. I vaguely recall his mention of Jacques Maritain. Again and again he would return to this theme. Whether he was only teasing or in earnest I

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cannot now say, but he did indicate that he was very much attracted to the Roman Catholic church. I was rather alarmed to hear this. It was a time when quite a number of bright young students at the University of Chicago and elsewhere had become converts. I cautioned Delmore to reflect carefully before he took the plunge. On a subsequent occasion, after I had voiced my concern, I was immensely relieved when he suddenly turned to me and said, "Don't worry, Professor Hook. My father isn't in real estate for nothing!" This was his way of telling me that he was not a naïf, prepared to act on the ideas he was entertaining either for the love of it or to discomfit those he did not like.

Delmore kept in touch with me episodically after he left New York University. Fame came to him early, and in the light of his subsequent development it is obvious that the fame went to his head. I was rather put off by his treatment of Gertrude, his first wife, who, also a student at NYU, was an intelligent and likable person who could have been a steadying influence on him. He dropped her when his star rose in the literary firmament. I met him several times at the homes of editors of the *Partisan Review*. He fancied himself as not only a poet but a man of the world and a realistic political analyst, in which latter roles he was quite unconvincing. I was shocked by his rude and cruel treatment of Elizabeth, his second wife, who seemed so vulnerable in her early infatuation with him. When I once gently expressed my puzzlement at his behavior, he burst out in a furious denunciation of her infidelities, which were clearly imaginary. From what I was told about him, it seemed that his conduct was becoming more and more arbitrary. He began to drink, and he once called on me when he was in a state of glassy-eyed inebriation. It seemed to me that he enjoyed a kind of *Narrenfreiheit* among his friends: none of them dared call him to account lest he lose his temper and cut them out of his life.

Toward the end of his life, Delmore showed up in my office to borrow money and spoke darkly about conspiracies being hatched against him. The news of his death came as a great shock. I could not help feeling that, although he had many friends whose help he had exploited and sometimes spurned, something could have been done to save him from himself. But what could have been done I do not know.

There can be little doubt that Delmore Schwartz was afflicted with insanity. It was latent, and no one who knew him as a student and youthful writer could have suspected its eruption. Nor can anyone reasonably claim that he was driven to insanity by a hostile or indifferent society. Few persons of his age were ever given more opportunities to follow their calling, or enjoyed more kindnesses, or received more praise and encouragement—not only from his friends and colleagues but from established figures in the world of letters. Some of them were known for

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their critical acerbity, and others, one might have suspected, may have been touched with envy. Yet they were all generous in their judgments of Delmore. By the time he had reached the age of twenty-four, the world was Delmore Schwartz's oyster. Yet he lived a largely miserable life and died a miserable death—and made others deeply miserable as he wound his way to the end.

In the fall of 1960 Delmore gave me, after one of his periodic visits to my office, a copy of a brochure consisting of three lectures delivered in 1958 at the Library of Congress under the auspices of the Gertrude Clarke Whittall Poetry and Literature Fund and entitled *American Poetry at Mid-Century*. It was inscribed, "To Sidney—Master of those who love reason and study irrationality, from Delmore, October 1960." One of the three lectures was Delmore's "The Present State of Poetry." (The other two were by John Crowe Ransom and John Hall Wheelock.) His essay was an eminently reasonable, informative, and witty analysis of the new estate that poetry had won in American life—its positive and negative features. It justified his implied claim in the inscription: to be one who loved reason, at least in theory, and studied irrationality. In part it was a scathing analysis of the political idiocy of the frothy San Francisco Beats, who were pretending to lead an insurrection against a nonexistent threat of oppression. They were even attempting to link the residual philistinism of American cultural and literary life with the unmitigated Soviet political and cultural terror in Europe. One of the Beats had asserted, "Poets are coming to San Francisco for the same reasons that Hungarians have been going to Austria recently" (in the aftermath of the ruthless suppression of the Hungarian revolt of 1956). In a sardonic reply to those who held this and similar views, Delmore Schwartz observed that apparently they did not "recognize the difference between the Red Army and the *Kenyon Review* critics, between Nikita Khrushchev and John Crowe Ransom, or between the political commissars of a police state and the tyrants who write advertising copy on Madison Avenue."

It should be pointed out that not all Delmore's political judgments were marked by this refreshing common sense. During the grim years when it appeared that Hitler and the Japanese warlords might be triumphant, he refused to endorse the policy of critical support of the war against fascism. He did not go as far as Paul Goodman and other irresponsibles who declared that American workers had more to fear from Roosevelt than from a triumphant Hitler. His opposition to the war, discreetly expressed, seemed to stem from a fear that reports of great battles and other events would distract the public's attention from his forthcoming books of poetry. His vanity, rather than any reasoned view of history and society, came into play in many of his observations.

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No matter how bizarre Delmore's judgment—and, unfortunately, his behavior—it was almost always extenuated by friends and admirers on the ground that he was a poet, even by those who were up in arms at the political judgments and activities of T. S. Eliot and Ezra Pound. Whether by accident or because he was somewhat inhibited owing to our teacher-student relationship of the past, on the few occasions when I met him socially he was quite restrained and not as voluble as others have reported. But I recall being told by the editors of the *Partisan Review* several times, as something especially noteworthy in their poetry editor, that "once he got lit up" he would talk excitedly and knowledgeably about politics.

The speculation is idle, but I cannot help wondering whether, if Delmore Schwartz had not been overpraised, if he had been firmly criticized with no obvious evidence of unfairness, he might not have developed differently and led a more disciplined, less wayward life. He peopled his world with imaginary enemies in order not to blame himself. Perhaps if his early published work had met with a more balanced critical reception, his efforts to modify or refute the negative judgments might have led to a more productive and less unhappy life as both a poet and a human being.

The only other editor of the *Partisan Review* I knew well was William Barrett. It is difficult to write about him, since he was a colleague of mine from 1948, when I invited him to teach at New York University, until 1973 when I left. He enjoyed complete freedom to teach courses in fields at that time quite removed from the conventional areas of interest of academic philosophy. He proved to be a brilliant teacher, and though he has not won the esteem of most of his professional colleagues in philosophy, he has acquired a wide reputation in literary circles as an interpreter of existentialism in its different varieties and of Zen Buddhism. Barrett was the only trained mind among the editors of the *Partisan Review*, the only one who could appreciate an argument in its own terms, and who recognized what constituted relevant evidence, and so forth. Unfortunately, as a young man he seemed to stand in too great an awe of his fellow editors. On the few occasions when I met him in their company, he was reticent in the give-and-take of opinions, more of an observer than a participant.

Oddly enough I rarely discussed political questions with Barrett, primarily because I made it a rule for obvious reasons not to raise them with younger members of the department. We were far apart on the questions of existentialism and psychoanalysis, of which I was a consistent and unabashed critic. Barrett has remarkable literary gifts, and I am convinced that he would have made a mark as a novelist of ideas and character had he launched himself on a literary career. However, it is

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Barrett's writings about his editorial colleagues on the *Partisan Review* that have contributed more than anyone else's to the legend of the magazine's importance as a cultural institution. In his book *The Truants: Adventures Among the Intellectuals*, Barrett manages to breathe a vitality into his colleagues that credits his powers of perception, though I must confess that to me it is greater evidence of his powers of imagination. As far as I was concerned, Rahv and Phillips were important only because they were the principal editors of the *Partisan Review* and not because of any personal, political, or intellectual virtues they had. One never thought of them as persons with whom one would like to discuss ideas in order to think things through. During the period when Barrett knew them best, my relations with them were intermittent. He accurately sensed the antipathy between Rahv and me, which came to a head when I organized the opposition to the Waldorf Peace Conference in 1949. Whether it was because William Phillips played such an active role in the subsequent life of the American Committee for Cultural Freedom that arose after that episode or because of Rahv's disagreement with its activities, he and I stopped communicating with each other even when we met. But I was reliably informed that he continued his vicious backbiting about me with others.

On the other hand, my relations with William Phillips during this time became closer, mainly because of his growing estrangement from Rahv. This was in the 1950s, when we were fighting the cultural cold war against the Communists. In reading Barrett's chronicle of and reflections upon this period, I was surprised to discover no mention of his unhappiness with the political and cultural line our group took—surprised because I have very vivid memories of William Phillips urging me "to talk with Will Barrett" about these matters. According to Phillips, Barrett was extremely critical of our alleged failure to criticize American shortcomings (which the record does not substantiate) and of our "mindless anti-Communism"—a phrase that became current in the 1960s despite, if anything, the intellectualized basis of our criticism of Communist ideology.

There is nothing in Barrett's memories and analysis of the *Partisan Review* that confirms William Phillips's reports of his views—reports that made me uncomfortable, since I could not initiate discussion of them with Barrett, who pointedly avoided any political discussions with me. As the years wore on, he radiated an air of profound dissatisfaction with academic philosophy. His classes were always crowded, since he was an engaging teacher, but his interests in strictly philosophical issues became marginal. Although he was to abandon existentialism at the close of his career, for the major part of it he was devoted to proving the unreasonableness of reason, the powers if not the virtues of irrational

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man, and to rendering meaningful modes of expression and experience that were ignored or dismissed by his more analytic-minded colleagues. Although our relations remained quite friendly and I continued to recommend him for fellowships on the basis of his abilities and achievements, I ended up believing that he was a gifted aesthete who had wandered into the academy and lacked the energy to leave it and devote himself to a literary career for which in his heart of hearts he longed. After I retired from active teaching, I was distressed to learn from some of Barrett's students that he had suddenly discovered the virtues of a free market economy and kept sounding off in class like a crotchety economic libertarian against the government because of its tax policies. It was in the cards that before long he would discover the perennial appeal of the values and institutions he had flouted all of his mature life, and end up in the arms of God as the only abiding source of meaning in life, the only reliable cure for alienation. Nonetheless, Barrett has never received adequate recognition of his capacities and true merits either from his analytically minded professional colleagues—although he can hold his own with most of them—or from the world of letters.

Mention should perhaps be made of Mary McCarthy as an associate or peripheral editor of *Partisan Review*. This came about originally more because of her personal involvement with Philip Rahv than because of any coherent political views on her part. Her Communist convictions—if they can be called such—were as significant to her as her old college royalist convictions, which, as she confessed in retrospect, she put aside "in an inner closet as you do a dress or ornament that you perceive strikes the wrong note." She had become admiringly involved in the social and political life of the Communist movement in the mid-thirties without, as far as I could see, any comprehension of the issues at stake. It was an affair of fun and games for her.

On one occasion, almost by accident, she had expressed her belief that Leon Trotsky, about whom she knew little, was entitled to a hearing and political asylum. This made her a target of a Communist Party campaign to disassociate her from the Committee for the Defense of Leon Trotsky, which had listed her name without her authorization. But she showed little understanding of what was at stake. Before she took her stand against the Moscow Trials, she had been, as she acknowledges, "either indifferent or pro-Communist." Now she interpreted her new stance as anti-Communist, despite the fact that the *Partisan Review*, of which she was an associate editor and important contributor, and many members of the Committee she had joined were protesting the Moscow Trials as a *betrayal* of Communism. It was only when she began to read the literature of the Committee that she found intellectual ground to stand on. Since those days she has regarded herself as a non-Stalinist

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"leftist" as well as a liberal *pur sang*, not realizing that to say one was a non-Stalinist leftist at that time could only mean that one was a Communist of sorts. The expressions "non-Stalinist leftists" or even "non-Stalinist socialists" were not current during that period. Only the different varieties of Leninists and Trotskyists significantly differentiated themselves from Stalinists. In her various enthusiasms since then, Mary McCarthy has, in my view, epitomized political irresponsibility.

Our relations were always friendly. She wanted me to give her private lessons in metaphysics, but my wife firmly put her foot down. I felt relieved: having read some of her writings, I realized that I would become a savaged character in one of her short stories or novelettes. Her imagination seems to be limited only to individuals she knows. The men she writes about are those she has flirtatiously attracted and then pinned down as literary specimens. I once innocently asked her why she picked as her literary protagonists so many unappetizing types and why she could find no one with a noble or redeeming character to write about. She answered evasively. Many years later, on a television program, she was asked by Edward R. Newman whether she had ever been criticized because of her gallery of unsavory characters. To this she replied: "Yes, once by Sidney Hook who obviously wanted me to write about him."

In recent years Mary McCarthy has never missed an opportunity to strike a political appearance as a pure spirit, as much a critic of the critics of Communism as of Communists. Indeed, she has been much harder on the former than the latter. Although an avowed anti-Stalinist, she traveled to Hanoi and wrote about its Stalinist Communist regime with uncritical enthusiasm, apparently taken in by the blandishments of her hosts, who immediately recognized how vulnerable to their propaganda she had become in virtue of her combination of vanity and guilt. North Vietnam was one of the staunchest Stalinist states in the Communist world. She magnified every atrocity committed by, or attributed to, the South Vietnam and American forces, but denied the more deliberate and systematic atrocities of the Vietcong and the North Vietnamese—including their responsibility for the massacres at Hue after the failed Tet offensive. She dismissed the fears and predictions that the pullout she urged of American forces—which she correctly described as "surrender"—would be followed by hundreds of thousands of arrests, brutal imprisonment, and liquidation, as a "crocodile concern" for those who deserved their fate.

But then Mary McCarthy has an almost infinite capacity for self-deception, which enables her to close her eyes to the consequences of words and actions that make her uncomfortable. It is reflected in small matters as well as large. When Randall Jarrell's *Pictures from an Institution* appeared, every knowledgeable person recognized Mary

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McCarthy as the lady whose chief literary activity was malicious mischief. I once asked her, after the book appeared, how she felt being made the subject of so acidulous a novel. She claimed to be puzzled by the question. When I identified the book and character she blithely retorted: "Oh! That wasn't me! That was Elizabeth Hardwick!" Not even the protestations of her devotee, Philip Rahv, who was standing by and whom she had left for Edmund Wilson "to better myself" (as I heard her tell him on the wall phone from the restaurant where she was dining on the day it happened) disabused her. She was and still is the model of the female bohemian revolutionary.

I have entitled this memoir about the editors of the *Partisan Review* "The Radical Comedians" because there was something truly comic about their self-conscious role as political revolutionaries and cultural radicals, about the disparity between their profession and their performance. The truth is that they were peripheral and parasitic to the genuine movements for change in the social and political life of the country. They led a safe life in the culture they decried, made no sacrifices, endured no discomforts, all the while playing the role of radicals. But in deceiving themselves they nonetheless did succeed in creating a legend about their contribution to American radicalism that will probably outlive any revelations of the sober truth about them. Whatever their influence on the literary life of our time—and others are better able to assess that than I am—they played no significant role in the political thinking of the country as reflected in its serious intellectual life from the mid-thirties to the recent past.

Fred Dupee, who in the early years was associated editorially with *Partisan Review*, on several occasions claimed that I was the magazine's political mentor, at least in the beginning. To the extent that this is true, I must share the responsibility for the social and political illusions that blinded all of us to the recuperative powers of the American economy and to the strength of native democratic traditions. Such knowledge would have had a sobering effect on our fantasies about the future. For all of our scientific allegiance, we were not empirical enough. We accepted the quasi-mystical outlook in assuming that social and economic forces determined the future for which we had no moral role or responsibility.

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Logodrama

GREG MOSS

She deposited her name in my vocabulary
And stepped into my life surefooted like the verb she was.
Nuances of old adjectives I thought I knew appeared thereof:

Evening. Autumnal. Breathless. Open. Wild.

Moreover her presence argued
As convincingly as the softest concrete nouns:

Wind and Flower. Dove and Sky.

Adverbs trailed mellifluously, ethereally from her gown.

But, alas, she was a verb,
Transitive, on the move.

Ultimately even the nouns turned abstract
Like Delusion and Caprice.

Trusting in her indicative sighs,
I never suspected she would leave me
In this blue subjunctive mood.

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The Poetry Reading

Public Performance/Private Art

DONALD HALL

Numbers and Numbers

When the distribution of anything changes, we look for alteration in the thing itself. The publication of literature, or its making-public, takes many forms. Certainly the technology of reproduction—from scrivener to movable font to while-u-wait offset—has affected what is written. In the past thirty years, the poetry reading, which used to be rare, has become the chief form of publication for American poets. Annually, hundreds of thousands of listeners hear tens of thousands of readings. Of course this phenomenon has changed poetry—and not unequivocally.

The United States is full of critics with a professional interest in the contemporary, who have insulated themselves from awareness of this phenomenon. They do not know what is happening; nor do most editors and book reviewers. The department of English sponsors most readings—but it is ambivalent on the subject. It does not like to *think* about poetry readings, and if as a critic it mentions them at all, it is dismissive or ironical. A recent survey of American literature since 1945, which devoted three hundred pages to poetry, made no mention of the poetry reading. Recently a brief account of the literary scene touched on poetry readings in these terms:

> Take, for example, poetry readings. . . . I myself was not long ago at a university in Ohio, a small liberal-arts school, where conversation revealed that an almost endless chain of poets had read there: Ignatow, Levertov, Wakoski, et al. Do many people show up for these poetry readings? I asked. Usually eight or ten kids, I was told.

Now I suspect that these figures are the respondent's fantasy. I doubt that "an endless chain" of poets like Denise Levertov read to eight or ten students only. It is, however, a common fantasy about poetry readings.

Those remarks about poetry readings come from "The Literary Life Today," an article that appeared in the *New Criterion*, and that was

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written by the editor of THE AMERICAN SCHOLAR. By coincidence Joseph Epstein wrote to me suggesting a contribution to THE AMERICAN SCHOLAR while I was still grumbling about his remarks on the poetry reading. My answer prompted him to suggest this article. In the letter that made the suggestion, Mr. Epstein provided more grist for my mill. The phenomenon of the poetry reading, he wrote,

> is one, I am beginning to believe, that I do not really understand. I used to go to poetry readings when I was an undergraduate and when the poet was a great celebrity—Marianne Moore, say, or E. E. Cummings or T. S. Eliot. The purpose . . . was to gaze upon these figures I so admired. Is it still the same, even though the figures seem less? Is the purpose of poetry readings to put a few dollars in the poet's pocket, or a few boys or girls in his bed?

The answer to the last question is yes, of course; but I think that there are other purposes as well. Maybe I do not understand this phenomenon either, but I have much experience of it, from both sides of the lectern. Although I cannot pretend to disinterest (I like to read my poems aloud; the poetry reading contributes to my support), I think I can provide some information.

In London in the early 1900s, the young Ezra Pound delivered papers that became *The Spirit of Romance*. Earlier, Dickens read from his novels, and Emerson—reading lectures later developed into essays—performed his oeuvre. But in the past, writers usually lectured about their art instead of performing it. Ezra Pound read not his poems but his scholarship. Whitman lectured on Abraham Lincoln more often than he read "Lilacs." As late as the 1930s, when Yeats came to this country, moving from university to university, he usually lectured on "Three Great Irishmen" instead of reading his poems.

But in the twenties and thirties, things started to change. A few writers became famous for their performances, most obviously Vachel Lindsay. Robert Frost and Carl Sandburg traveled the country reading on campuses, Sandburg with his guitar, and Frost with his studied charm. It suited Frost to be appreciated; it suited him to take in the dollars. Contrary to popular wisdom, Frost's income from royalties was insufficient for support until shortly before his death. Later, Dylan Thomas on his three American tours drew attention to poetry readings. Surely some of this attention was legitimate: he sang other poets' poems as well as his own, read beautifully, and traveled not only as the Poet himself but as the Voice of Poetry, rhapsode and reciter. Also, of course, he was notorious; stories circulated of the poet not turning up, of the poet missing in Toledo and discovered in Akron, of what Dylan said to the Chair at Mt. Holyoke. . . . Because he was the fashionable college poet of his day—the Annapolis undergraduate James Earl Carter owned

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his copy of Dylan Thomas—contemporary poetry started to be identified with the poetry reading. Because the phenomenon was both good and bad—excellence and the freak show—Dylan Thomas provides both starting point and emblem.

For it was right after his successful tours that poetry readings began to multiply. My college, Harvard, late in the forties put on two readings a year paid for by an endowment. Few colleges in America averaged as many. Yet by the summer of 1956, one could feel a new appetite for the poetry reading. That summer in Cambridge the Poet's Theater mounted a series of weekly readings. We filled our small auditorium ten weeks in a row with available poets; I remember readings by John Holmes, Richard Eberhart, John Heath-Stubbs, Paul Engle (who was teaching summer school), Richard Wilbur, Philip Booth.

In New York City, the Poetry Center (first under John Malcolm Brinnin's direction, then Betty Kray's) had started its series of readings. Betty Kray instituted statewide poetry circuits—Michigan, Ohio, North Carolina—in which colleges combined to share travel expenses as a poet hurtled from campus to campus; each college paid the poet a small fee—a hundred dollars, usually—but volume allowed a young poet to clear a useful sum in two weeks. For more eminent poets the fees were larger. About 1960, lecture agents started telephoning poets, signing them on, adding them to their Sears catalogues of speakers. Poets' heads turned up, postage-stamp size, on pages that offered Senator Estes Kefauver, Norman Vincent Peale, Richard Wilbur. When agents peddled poets twenty-five years ago, the fee might be five hundred dollars plus travel. (In heady days in the late sixties, some poets required first-class air travel.) Twenty-five years later, the five-hundred-dollar fee has risen only to one thousand dollars—which is to say that poetry readings pay less than they used to. (James Dickey, on the other hand, has been known to accept $4,500 for one reading.) I do not suggest that agents started the vogue, but their energetic salesmanship carried it by long-distance telephone into remote areas. Suddenly there was money in the poetry reading, and lecture agents raised fees for everybody, not only for their clients. Harry Walker may have been the earliest. Now many agents and agencies peddle poets, including Selma Warner, who offers Andrei Voznesensky, Stephen Spender, Seamus Heaney, and Louis Simpson. The foremost agency representing poets is Lordly and Dame of Boston, where Bill Thompson lists 110 writers. Among the poets are: Richard Wilbur, Carolyn Forché, Ted Hughes, Philip Levine, Robert Pinsky, Maya Angelou, Margaret Atwood, Robert Creeley, Howard Nemerov, Denise Levertov, Adrienne Rich, W. D. Snodgrass, Allen Ginsberg, W. S. Merwin, Galway Kinnell, etc.

An agent collects a large portion of the fee, generally 30 to 35 percent,

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and works for it. He or she mails out promotional material and spends from nine to five smiling over the WATS line. Agents dicker and demand, where poets stammer and accept. If the poet without an agent waits for the telephone to ring, the poet keeps the whole fee offered; but if he refers that call to an agent, the agent will often ask for more money and get it, then peddle a second or third reading to other schools near the same airport. Schools save on travel expenses; agent and poet profit on the volume of sales.

When I speak of the numbers of poetry readings, I have one sort of event in mind, although it is not the only form the poetry reading takes. Here is how it usually works: the poet flies into town and is met by the host at the airport; he is registered at a motel and taken to lunch. At some hour of the afternoon (before the reading at eight o'clock) the poet speaks informally—to a class, to the English club, to the creative writing faculty, to miscellaneous poetry lovers assembled for an open question-period. After cocktails and dinner, there is the reading and then the reception. Thus, the typical reading includes two advertised public performances, but, of course, lunches and dinners and receptions are also public performances. Poets become proficient at eating dinner—usually at Calvin Trillin's "Maison de la Casa House"—while answering intelligent questions. Often the car rides also require public performance. The next morning the poet flies out of town, sometimes to another airport, where, as in a nightmare, the same assistant professor meets him, driving the same Volkswagen Rabbit.

It is this standard college reading that I mostly speak of, but there are also readings in coffeehouses, bars, and bookstores; open readings, benefit readings, group benefit readings, open group benefit readings; readings in high schools, in prep schools; readings in public parks and churches; readings in art galleries and libraries; in municipal forums. . . . According to a 1976 article by Samuel Hazo that appeared in this magazine: "There are more than one hundred and twenty-five centers or forums in this country that regularly sponsor poetry readings." The centers include the United States Poetry Forum in Pittsburgh, well endowed, and engineered for decades by Professor Hazo; uptown poetry centers like the YMHA, 92nd Street and Lexington Avenue in Manhattan; downtown centers like the St. Mark's Church on the East Side; coffeehouses in Berkeley, bars in Eau Claire, Wisconsin, and the Worcester County Poetry Association.

Where Cambridge, Massachusetts, used to hear two Harvard readings a year, now there are dozens. The University's endowed series continues; there are readings in the Poetry Room of Lamont Library and at the Harvard *Advocate*; Harvard's houses hold poetry readings. Down the street, MIT runs its own series. In town, Gail Mazur runs a popular

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series at the Blacksmith House; from the Grolier Book Shop, Louisa Solano sponsors readings that she holds in a local church; from time to time a Cambridge bar or café will organize a series. The magazine *Ploughshares* holds benefit readings at Sanders Theater, capturing as many as a thousand listeners for Seamus Heaney or Richard Wilbur.

Doubtless thirty people assemble for *some* Cambridge readings; attendance, as they always tell you, is unpredictable. In the autumn of 1982, at the Southern Methodist University Literary Festival in Dallas, a thousand sat to hear James Dickey, and the same number showed up for Margaret Atwood. Seven hundred attended each reading by three other poets in the same week. Of course, such numbers are high, and it is impossible to generalize or to come up with reliable national statistics. I have tried to gather a few numbers that may be suggestive.

Poets and Writers supplies figures about readings in the state of New York, mostly outside the City. In 1981–82, the organization sponsored readings and workshops by 344 poets; 322 sponsors included colleges, writers' collectives, small presses, magazines, bookstores, theaters, community centers, after-school programs, art centers, senior citizens' centers, hospitals, museums, galleries, churches, synagogues, and prisons. Altogether, *Poets and Writers* sponsored 569 readings; the total audience *Poets and Writers* reached in 1981–82 (workshops and other performances added to readings) was 73,441. Doubtless *Poets and Writers* sponsored readings in Ithaca, New York, where a correspondent tells me that more than 50 readings took place between July 1982 and June 1983, mostly at three sites: Cornell, Ithaca College, and a bookstore. Among the 50 were Katha Pollitt, Mary Oliver, Gary Snyder, and Mona Van Duyn. As many as 500 heard Seamus Heaney, 400 Gwendolyn Brooks—and 12 heard one lesser-known visitor.

City readings thrive. There are so many readings in Boston and New York, San Francisco and Los Angeles, Cleveland, Washington, and Detroit that it is difficult for the consumer to keep track of them. But when there are commodities, there will be entrepreneurs—and there are currencies other than money. Surely the poetry reading newsletter is a recent phenomenon. In Cambridge, Blacksmith and Grolier both mail flyers that list readings besides their own. In New York City, according to the *New York Times Book Review*, "in a given month there might be over three hundred [readings] at seventy sites—ranging from churches to bars, small halls to college auditoriums." At any rate, "Poetry readings are proliferating," and the result has been "a monthly listing of readings throughout the city" called *NYC Poetry Calendar*. With a circulation of four thousand, supported by advertising and a state grant, the newsletter costs its subscribers five dollars a year. San Francisco's *Poetry Flash* is older, more ambitious, and charges its subscribers seven dollars. A

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recent *Poetry Flash* contained twelve pages—reviews of poetry books, photographs, two interviews, advertising for books, readings, lectures, magazines, and plays, and a calendar that listed 180 poetry events for one month. These events included readings, performances of verse plays, workshops, and lectures on poetry. (Many San Francisco occasions do not resemble the standard reading. A Momo's Press book, *The Poetry Reading*, edited in 1982 by Stephen Vincent and Ellen Zweig, concentrates on improvisations and other innovative poetry performances.) In Washington, D.C., the Folger Shakespeare Library publishes *Poetry Clearing House*, a bimonthly "News on Poetry in Washington," which provides a calendar of readings and lists books and magazines received. In Detroit, Michigan, an institution called the Poetry Resource Center publishes the *PRC Newsletter and Calendar* and sponsors an annual poetry festival. "Festival Events" in 1983 included a showing of *Stevie*, workshops, lectures, "A Bi-lingual Performance" of Spanish-American poetry, a book sale, an occasion titled "Mad Dog Surrealism" combining verse and music, readings by ten new Michigan poets, a Friday evening featuring four older ones—Conrad Hilberry, Edward Hirsch, Gloria House, and Lawrence Joseph—and a Saturday reading by the festival's headliner, Philip Levine.

For further documentation, let us glance at the state of Ohio. More than twenty years ago Betty Kray helped start Ohio's poetry circuit, which has continued without interruption despite its ups and downs. Currently the circuit launches three poets a year to Miami University, University of Cincinnati, Ohio Wesleyan, Denison, Wittenberg, Otterbein, and Kenyon. In the past it has included Ohio University, Ohio State, Oberlin, and doubtless other campuses; colleges drop out and return. Poets receive $150 and their expenses; the net $900 will allow some to avoid teaching a term in summer. Some colleges like Otterbein take three circuit riders and add two or three more readers. This small liberal arts college in Westerville issues a brochure about each visitor, *Poetry at Otterbein*, with a photograph and biography of the visitor. Attendance rides from 40 (bad weather) to 110 (Mary Oliver's second visit, benefiting from word of mouth after the first). People come from Columbus, where Ohio State—at the moment inactive on the circuit—is located. At Kenyon College, better known in literary circles, attendance runs only from 20 to 40. (The small Kenyon audience contradicts one saw: the smaller the campus, the larger the crowd. It validates another: the more literary the campus, the smaller the crowd.) At Ohio Wesleyan, attendance for the circuit poets averages 40 and goes to 90. Ohio University, with its active program in creative writing and its *Ohio Review*, sponsors about eight readings a year, outside the circuit, and its audience ranges from 70 to 150. In Ada, Ohio, Ohio North-

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ern University sponsors only one reading a year—but 400 attend.

Special occasions make for other readings. Martins Ferry holds an annual weekend in the small town's library in memory of James Wright, who grew up there. The sponsors bring in poets—so far, old friends of Wright—who read James Wright and talk about him and read their own poems as well. There have been three annual festivals, two visitors a year. In the spring of 1983, Kenyon College, where Wright received his B.A., sponsored another gathering in his honor.

There are, of course, hundreds of other readings in Ohio—Cincinnati, Dayton, Toledo, Bowling Green, Akron. If Ohio State is in a dry patch for readings, the town of Columbus has recently started a series of summer readings, Poetry Readings in the Park, where thirty local poets read, three at a time, in ten weekly readings to an audience of fifty to a hundred. Twice a year, the sponsors import poets from elsewhere, and the audience reaches four hundred.

Hold the phone! ". . . thirty local poets read, three at a time, in ten weekly readings. . . ." But, there weren't thirty *poets* in Elizabethan England! How can we find thirty each year in Columbus, Ohio?

Now I doff my costume of research statistician employed by the Poetry Boosters' Club, and substitute my elitist suit. As agribusiness has replaced farming in America, the art of poetry has been replaced by poëbusiness. This industry's cheerful vulgarity fills writers' newsletters—*Coda* from Poets and Writers, *AWP Bulletin* from the Association of Writing Programs, and *Teachers and Writers* from the Teachers and Writers Collaborative. (Poëbusiness is a wholly owned subsidiary of Edubusiness, Inc.) The May–June issue of *Teachers and Writers* included some interesting remarks by one Harry Greenberg, who "has worked in the T & W program for years. He is a coeditor of *Some* magazine and Release Press Books. His poems have been widely published." He shares his classroom-poet techniques as well as his Weltanschauung:

> I'm always in the "crow's nest," alert for ways to add more appeal to my poetry lessons. I believe strongly in packaging. . . . I strive to make my teaching a touch out of the ordinary so that I can entertain and motivate in fresh ways. When I prepare for a class I decide what poetic point I want to work on and then how I can sell it to the class in a relaxed yet riveting manner.

One recollects, of course, John Milton's relaxed but riveting manner as he packaged "Lycidas"; one remembers Keats's letters, with their attention to appeal and entertainment, not to mention motivation. In America everything is for sale!—and everything declares its worth by the numbers attached to it. One is driven to quote Mr. Epstein again, whose published remarks on the poetry reading continued:

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One poet who apparently draws unfailingly large crowds at universities is the feminist Adrienne Rich. I have never seen Miss Rich in performance. Doubtless hers is a fine enough show. Yet it does say something about the present state of literature that the only poet who can consistently draw large crowds at a university is a thoroughly politicized one.

But hold the phone again.

Perhaps the great numbers cited—from James Dickey, who claims that his audience derives from his association with Burt Reynolds, to Adrienne Rich—depend on extra-poetical association. But just what *is* this about numbers? Why do I need to begin an article on poetry readings by insisting on how many there are? It is our national habit of quantification. If Mr. Epstein expresses skepticism about poetry readings because only eight or ten attend, does he express it again because three hundred listen to a feminist poet? Does it matter whether ten or three hundred attend?

Numbers are the bane of the American arts establishment. Someone starts a local arts council, say, out of enthusiasm for the performance of music. After a great effort of money raising, touring groups play in town halls and churches. Wonderful. Then the council makes a grant to a local theater group for a play; the high school asks for money to pay a visiting ceramicist. Quickly, the local council needs more money; it hires an arts administrator, veteran of grantsmanship conferences, who applies for federal handouts. There is only one way to get grants: show that citizens flock to your concerts in great numbers. Stars beget audiences, audiences beget grants, grants beget stars. . . . Soon enough the arts council packages a string quartet as if it were Popsicles.

Elitists and populists unite to play the game of numbers. If only eight or ten attended the Ohio school's readings, it does not matter—until the sponsor looks for funding. A professor at a small liberal arts college in Ohio writes me that his attitude toward attendance has changed; his college averages eighty, but there is "a loyal audience of about twenty-five here." It is for these steady listeners that the professor values his poetry readings. "Of course, come February 15 each year—grant deadline—I talk as if we are serving the great unwashed."

The great unwashed. H'm.

II

The Horror, the Horror! of Poetry Readings

So: there are thousands of poetry readings every year in the United States; tens of thousands attend; and numbers do not matter. In the same

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spirit I now make two assertions: (1) poetry readings are narcissistic exhibitions devastating to poets, audience, and American poetry; (2) poetry readings are the best thing that ever happened to poet, audience, and American poetry.

John Frederick Nims, poet and former editor of *Poetry*, is less ambivalent. He suggests on a postcard that "poetry readings are to our time what the Black Plague was to the fourteenth century." In a letter he quotes Trollope on the subject:

> There is, perhaps, no greater hardship at present inflicted on mankind in civilised and free countries, than the necessity of listening to poetry readings. No one but a visiting poet has, in these realms, the power of compelling an audience to sit silent, and be tormented. No one but a visiting poet can revel in platitudes, truisms, and untruisms, and yet receive, as his undisputed privilege, the same respectful demeanor as though words of impassioned eloquence, or persuasive logic, fell from his lips. . . . A member of Parliament can be coughed down or counted out. Town-councillors can be tabooed. But no one can rid himself of the visiting poet . . . that anxious longing for escape, which is the common consequence of poetry readings. . . . But you must excuse me, my insufficient young poet, if I yawn over your imperfect sentences, your repeated phrases, your false pathos, your drawlings and denouncings, your humming and hawing, your oh-ing and ah-ing.

Nims has, of course, here altered the language of *Barchester Towers* in trifling ways, substituting "poetry readings" for "sermons" and "visiting poet" for "preaching clergyman."

Nims is right, if mild mannered, about many readings. When bad poets perform bad poems badly, nothing inhibits the progression of boredom into loathing. And sometimes better poets read badly. There are poets so avid *not* to ingratiate themselves that they appear contemptuous of audiences. Katharyn Machan Aal (who is studying readings and has supplied me much information) writes in a letter about the poet who, "perhaps out of a misplaced sense of humility," refuses to perform, to create in performance "an act of art (Gary Snyder offered this phrase)" and "attempts to be as much like the printed page as possible."

Yes. And maybe another sort of reading is worse—when the poet performs badly: shouts and whispers and dances and goofs off, playground showboat and ham actor, covering by gimmicks barren language and thought. (The super-performer is usually a bad poet; sometimes it is hard to tell.) Even great poets cheapen their poems by exhibitionism. Surely the vanity of poets rivals the vanity of opera singers and academic deans. As a poet turns older, the vanity often worsens, and poetry reading becomes anticipatory immortality, the deification of Caligula's horse. As ways of writing bad poems are infinite, so are the ways of reading badly: inappropriate comedy, sentimentality, performance ex-

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cesses. The poet solicits or demands attention: More! More! And the audience, assembled in our celebrity culture to revere poets as celebrities, behaves as revoltingly as the poet—cooing at cuteness, applauding cheap shots at other poets or at academics, encouraging an appetite for adulation by indulging its own crowd-stupid appetite for adoring. I have seen Robert Frost make coo-material for the coo-ers; I have heard Robert Lowell play his audience with the skill and vulgarity of Ed McMahon.

Such models! It is no wonder that bad poets—or unbad poets—approach the example set by the great ones. I have also listened to good readings by Frost and Lowell—centering on poetry not on poet, serious without pomposity. Sometimes when poets read in a group one hears the gamut of possibilities. When poets gather to raise money for a cause—to read ten minutes each against nuclear proliferation—it is a tradition never violated that the worst poet on the platform reads for forty-three minutes.

So far I have spoken only of readings unpleasant because of excessive performance or contemptuous manners or bad poetry. Maybe there is something to be said against *any* performance of poetry, even a good one. In an essay in the *London Review of Books*, Barbara Everett writes: "A great stage of civilization was achieved when human beings started to read silently, to themselves, without moving their mouths; it was a plateau of inwardness reached only slowly." Celebrators of the poetry reading find it the restitution of poetry's collective oral origins, as if the rows of sophomores resembled Homer's shaggy listeners. Maybe we should consider instead that the poetry reading deprives us of civilization's inwardness. Obviously, any performance deprives us of the opportunity to supply our own sound and gesture. Performance makes passivity. When we read silently, we must hear what we read in the mind's ear. (If our throat be not tired after silent reading, we read with eyes alone, and we will never discover the plateau of inwardness.) When mind's voice speaks to mind's ear, we make sounds as perfect as an internal aria. At the same time, our response to the poem is our own: no communal laugh or sigh or intaken breath controls or suggests the direction of response. Poet and reader, alone together, find an intimacy that crowds inhibit or prevent. The private art—poet in solitude finding and shaping the only word, carving it like alabaster; not poet as gregarious talker improvising the moment's eloquence—finds in silent reading its appropriate publication: its public is a series of intense privacies.

In a *Hudson Review* article, James Finn Cotter speaks for a constituency of silent readers as he faces a hoard of poetry books in which the poems are the raw materials of poetry readings. He quotes from a dust

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jacket, "Most of the poems in this book . . . I have thought of as I wrote them as 'scripts' for me to read aloud." Cotter says that the author "does not have us in mind at all," where "us" is people who read by themselves. He supposes that the thousands who attend poetry readings, apparently listening, do not necessarily become readers. He is right. Although poetry sales have increased tenfold, although sales follow readings, most steady listeners prefer hearing to reading. They are addicts not of poetry as a whole but of poetry as it is performed.

It is no wonder—for these various reasons—that we find literary professionals hostile to poetry readings. English departments harbor yet another source of hostility to the poetry reading, and to contemporary poets—economic envy. Lawyers from the law school, business professors from the business school, engineers, economists, mathematicians, physicists, and chemists all do consulting; they take a day off from teaching, fly to Boston, and make one thousand dollars. But teachers of Latin and of Renaissance painting fly nowhere, and in English departments, only the writers make money beyond their salaries. Hostility to readings derives partly from envy—envy mostly of money, but envy also of the supposed sexual favors of imagined devoted youth. Naturally, envy wears the costume of lofty, literary purity.

Of course, there is a sordid side to the vogue. Where there is money, there is corruption, even when the money is small. The poetry reading can become a commodity for trade. I had not been teaching long when I had a letter from a poet on another campus suggesting that he and I exchange readings the next year. It seemed a friendly notion; vanity suppressed my suspicious nature. As it happened, I did not like this fellow's poems. I thought of ways to get out of inviting him. Suddenly I realized that he proposed an impropriety: that we each use our influence to spend the taxpayer's money (or endowment income) for the other.

And money is not the only item of trade. Sometimes when I visit a campus, I discover that I am invited not because I am so admired, alas, but because I am considered useful—to recommend my host for a Guggenheim, to write a review, to print poems in a magazine for which I edit, or to write a blurb for the jacket of a book. I do not suggest that poets are more corrupt than city councillors, bursars, and policemen; I suggest that we are also corrupt.

But my province in this essay is the corruption, not of souls, but of poetry. Does the vogue of the poetry reading hurt American poetry? If the lyric poet, gifted with a Pulitzer and seven consecutive standing ovations, daydreams not of immortality but of playing Caesar's Palace, what is the effect on the poetry written? Do the platform's abuses of self-worship, promiscuous gregariousness, flattery seeking, and guru-hood ruin the poems?

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Some people think so. In conversation, I heard a contemporary poet say that the poetry reading had ruined a generation once promising, because in pursuit of platform success poets wrote simplistic poems; no poem that is decently or humanly complex, he said, can reach an audience of twenty-year-olds at one hearing. He had a point; certainly the period style is simple in diction and syntax: "Dick saw Jane. / Jane saw Spot. / Spot wrote a poem about it." The poetry reading has sponsored this simplicity and it has sponsored other disasters. These days when we look at a new book of poetry, we are often struck by the preponderance of humor or attempted humor. Light-verse surrealism is a prevailing mode—silliness, goofiness—and it derives from the platform. Where poets once flourished cloaks, or shook long locks while displaying profiles, now they tell us that a funny thing happened this morning on the way to the tower.

Yet I don't agree that a generation has been ruined. I like many poems written in simple syntax, though by 1984 Dick and Jane have had their day. And if audiences cannot respond to *all* of a complex poem, they can take pleasure from its sound, from certain images, from resonances of which they lack full understanding. No excellent poem is immediately receivable, even in silent reading. When we look back at great poems we have known all our lives, we realize that our responses have altered and enlarged over decades. A listener can float on the sound of a complex poem, with a pleasure that is intense without being adequate. If poets hold onto this possibility, then the notion of reading the poem aloud—in their minds as they compose—can enforce the sensual without denying the complex.

Mostly I think that the poetry reading, when it contributes to failure, merely provides new ways to fail. Thirty years ago, the same poets would have played not the goofy grown-up but the sestina master. The ways of failure are as various as the stars in the sky.

But . . .

There are *more* things to worry about. Potential performance can infect single words. Years ago when I started reading poems aloud, I was working over a poem and finding it difficult; there was a place where I had the approximate word but not the right one. "Well," I remember thinking, "I can *say* it so that it is right." Then I realized that I had just made an assignation with an old devil in new clothing. We must try to be careful not to allow the saying to excuse the approximate. We must require the poem to work on the page as it works in the mouth.

If one reads aloud a great deal, one's voice remains in one's ear in composition. This voice enters the writing of the poem. It is inevitable that one writes with some notion of audience, of real hearers, of the rows of faces out there. It is inevitable that style and tone, manner and diction

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be affected. So the poetry reading, unless we are careful, may unconsciously limit or diminish what we write. But it may also enhance it.

III

The Wonder! the Wonder! of the Poetry Reading

There are good things about poetry readings, at least from the poet's point of view. Of course there is money. (Most poets will mention money first, with a giggle, in the good old American way. Never believe an American who says that he does anything for money.) It is *good* to have the money. Certain poets now make a go of it without teaching and without holding down regular work of any kind: Gary Snyder, Robert Bly, W. S. Merwin. Although these poets have translated and written prose, have received fellowships, the poetry reading has supplied most of their income for decades. Other poets have used their gains to take time away from the classroom. And this is to speak of money only as time, or as means to solitude. There is also a symbolism to money. Poets for the first time in centuries earn a living from their poetry.

There are less obvious benefits for poets—like travel. One wakes in New Hampshire, where the snow reaches seven feet on the north side, drives to Logan in early morning darkness, enplanes, naps, and, after a change in Dallas, rises again to consciousness in the Lubbock of west Texas, hot and arid, where a newspaper headline trumpets that tomorrow there is a 30 percent chance of rain. It is hallucination without chemical aid; it is provinciality's antidote. Later that evening in Lubbock, one talks with a talented Southwestern poet who is not averse to the military, unlike poets of the northeast; one talks poetry and guns. One also talks with another poet, from Illinois as it happens, who is visiting the other campus in Lubbock. The poetry reading mixes Southern poet with Northern, Midwestern with southern Californian. It diminished the geographical snobbism so wearily epidemic in the United States.

While the reading can encourage bad habits, it can also lead to revision. It holds poets to the record of past work. Reading old things aloud, perforce one becomes scholar of old errors. Such knowledge leads to tinkering with old poems, revising them in the margins of books. The same dissatisfaction may help us find fault with current work, and by reading it aloud we try it out. We err if we read something aloud that we essayed on the plane to Lubbock; premature publication blocks natural change; but when we have worked to the point where the new poem is no longer volatile, reading it is tentative publication; we watch it behave in public. Someone at the party afterward may say something useful, but

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it is more likely that we learn the poem's faults simply by saying it.

I speak of the poetry reading as if it benefited only the poet, but it takes two to tango. Who is the audience? What benefit does this audience derive? Of course the audience is various—silly, and serious, and largely college students (townspeople form 10 to 15 percent of the audience). Betty Kray talks about the hard-core of the New York audience, people who attend readings for "the relief of hearing *language.*" My Ohio correspondent praised the twenty-five who came for all readings. At Michigan, where I taught, audiences ran from fifty to four hundred, and fifty were always there. These addicts are a recent phenomenon nationwide, dedicated, some not awfully interested in silent reading—a new audience for poetry, for the language perhaps, or perhaps for the special experience of language performed. These people do not demand that the poet be celebrated. When they don't like what they hear they walk out; it is disconcerting, but they also walk out to go to class, or an assignation, or another poetry reading.

The special experience of language performed. Obviously, I believe that this experience is frequently violated—and that the institution of the reading is dangerous for the poet and the poetry. Effects of the poetry reading are good *and* bad. For instance, we might have predicted that the vogue of the reading would result in greater attention to poetry's sound. Yet in large part the opposite has happened, and contemporary poetry lacks sound even more than it lacks syntax: no meter or rhyme; more important, no attention to vowel and consonant repetition, which characterizes the free verse of William Carlos Williams, Wallace Stevens, and Ezra Pound; above all, the loss of the line as a melodic unit separate from grammar and sense. (The contemporary mode of the McPoem makes its lines from whole syntactic units.) I suppose that the reading sponsors this poverty because the poet's performance substitutes an actorly texture (pitch, volume, gestures; screaming, jumping, singing) for the real sound of words.

But this is the McPoem, which is always bad, whether it be sonnet sequence or narcissistic anecdote. The best poets of the moment are meticulous and mellifluous in their sound, which works on the page and out loud, and their ears are formed from long experience of reading to audiences. I think of Galway Kinnell, whose later poems owe sound and shape, their stylistic signature, to the poet's decades of speaking poems to audiences.

It is possible that the poetry reading has showed inferior poets ways to get worse—and has allowed good poets to become better. Surely it provides new dangers for poets and requires considerable scrupulosity of self-criticism. These dangers arise from the startling fact that poetry has acquired a visible public. But benefits rise from the same phenom-

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enon. If readings help the good poet become better, I praise the poetry reading.

For all that I have said of silent reading—of course it must continue alongside the noisy kind—I think that the poetry reading revives an aspect of poetry's nature too long neglected. For listeners at all levels, the good poet, reading his poems well, brings a message that students often hear more clearly than their instructors; poems do not issue from typewriters, quills, fountain pens, or word processors; poems are products of bodies and move through the air to other bodies—through voice out of stomach, chest, and mouth; out of foot-tapping, out of hand-gesturing. Criticism and book reviewing deal with new poetry as if it existed on the page only. Most commentators ignore poetry's principal mode of publication and often its aesthetic basis. Our eminent critics are eye-freaks and show no evidence of aural equipment. Most paraphrase ideas, divorced from prosody and from body. The poetry reading is publication by the body.

It is also confirmation that poems are addressed to other people. Most poets, if there were no pay for readings, would read for nothing, not only because physical publication is appropriate to poetry's nature. In the poetry reading, the poet's physical presence delivers the poem in its volume, pitch, and resonance from mouth and tongue with body's muscles tapping the foot, body's hands keeping time in air—and this dance takes place no longer in the hermit's cave, to be reconstituted in the distant other caves of distant other hermits, but in community's open air.

The poetry reading suggests, mandates, or validates this notion of community only when it becomes, as in Gary Snyder's words, "an act of art." For centuries, poets have written in solitude. When we publish in a magazine nothing happens; we may get a letter. When we publish a book, we may be reviewed a year later. In the poetry reading the relationship between poet and audience is clear and instantaneous. We write poems, always, with some sense that we might be speaking to others, that poems testify to potential connections among people, now with the living and potentially with the unborn. Present community can become palpable in the poetry reading, as the poet publishes dreams and phonemes by means of his timbre, pitch, and waving hand. Bad readings parody this connection; but at the best moments, like great theater when actor and audience merge, the poet, saying lines labored over in solitude, reads them returning on the faces of the audience.

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Julia

JOHN WAIN

To come across a character like Julia in a Warwickshire village was a strange, contradictory experience; on the one hand purely surprising, yet on the other entirely natural, since she was as believable, as solid, as inevitable as Dogberry or Mistress Quickly. And yet she resembled neither of these so much as she resembled a female version of the great Falstaff himself. Or perhaps, with her unquenchable oddity, she would have had to be invented, if she had been a fictitious character, by some connoisseur of the quirkiness of humanity rather than a writer of Shakespeare's centrality. One could imagine meeting her in the pages of *Tristram Shandy*. Yet her historical period, the scene of her adventures, was substantially the same as those of George du Maurier's *Trilby* or even Murger's *Vie de Bohème*.

After that rapid fire of literary allusions, entirely appropriate in introducing a person so highly charged with imagination, so accustomed to seeing her own life as a collection of legends that she never troubled to narrate, let us draw breath and come at the subject more factually. Julia's origins were Birmingham Irish. She had grown up in Shirley, where her father had kept, I think, a livery stable. I seem to remember someone saying that Julia as a girl used to help to break in horses; if so, this might have brought her into contact with circus and fairground people and perhaps started her on that lifelong association, in one form and another, with show business and the performing arts.

At all events, when I got to know her in the early to middle 1940s, she must have been over sixty; so that the version of her history most generally accepted, that she had been an artist's model in Paris at the turn of the century, squared perfectly well with chronology. (I say "generally accepted" because it was the version current among most people who knew her, though where they got it I am not sure, since Julia herself never mentioned her own past history except very rarely in a brief aside.) But she certainly knew Paris, and her memories of it seemed to be from that epoch and from the angle of vision, so to speak, that would be natural to a Birmingham girl who was modeling for a living and mixing with a bohemian, largely English-speaking, set. She referred

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now and then to Parisian buildings and institutions, but always gave them their names in English—"Oh, yes, that was in a little street over by the Red Windmill."

A girl from a Shirley livery stable who became a favorite of the artists' community in the Paris of 1900 must be presumed to have had something to offer, and perhaps the young Julia had been a beauty. When I first saw Julia I was nineteen, an age at which one does not think of people over forty as having physical lives at all, or even much in the way of a physical appearance beyond what will serve to tell one apart from another. They are, to the eyes of an adolescent as to the eyes of a child, rather like life-size animated dolls: always clothed, needless to say, and always in very much the same *kind* of clothes; and always moving, sitting, or standing in characteristic attitudes. Their individuality comes partly from the way they move their limbs and even more from the sound of their voices. If you hear a young person talking about an older one—a schoolboy, say, relating some encounter with a master—the voice will always be mimicked, and nearly always in grotesque caricature.

So, at nineteen, I did not think of Julia as "looking like" anything in particular, and certainly not as being beautiful or ugly. Her voice, which was cheerful and penetrating, was somewhat battered (what people called a "whiskey voice," which she had certainly taken steps to earn) but had clarity in its middle range, and must at one time have been melodious. In build she was of medium height for a woman, and, though by this time rather dumpy, she was supple and active enough. What strikes me, looking back, was that her head and face *were,* in fact, beautiful, with that beauty which is not affected by age because it is a matter of bone structure and carriage and expression. Her iron-gray hair was wound round her head in some sort of long plait, giving a helmet-like impression that carried a hint of the classical; she could have posed for a statue of Minerva. As for her face, its features were good; the nose in particular, straight and delicate, gave her refinement, a touch of the human thoroughbred.

I forgive my nineteen-year-old self, however, for not taking much notice of Julia's face, because one eye was covered by a large black patch, looped round her head with elastic. I suppose she found this more comfortable than a glass eye, and certainly the socket behind it was empty. So one tended, on catching sight of her face, to have one's attention drawn straight to the patch; and what remained of her girlish beauty, for surely it had once been fresh and vivid, went unnoticed.

As for how she came by the patch, once again her milieu had an accepted story: the eye had been shot out at the gaming table in Monte Carlo. Later I heard another version that laid the scene in, I think, Dieppe; a reckless, distraught gambler had pulled out a revolver and

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taken a shot at someone, the bullet had ricocheted and entered Julia's eye, whereupon Julia's escort had pulled out his own revolver and shot the man dead on the spot. Heady stuff, not normally associated with Warwickshire village life—the splendid, sinewy raw material of legend.

Meanwhile, what put me, at nineteen, into Julia's orbit? What gave me contact with the inner circle of her aides-de-camp, those privileged to impart to one another succulent fragments of her legend? The answer is simple: she kept "theatrical lodgings." This, I fancy, is a trade that has pretty well disappeared from the earth. In Victorian times the lower reaches of the acting profession lived a life that one would not have expected any human being to stand for, as long as there was a ditch to dig. Every town of any size had a theater; most theaters were played by little fit-up companies that performed for one week—six evening shows and at least one matinee—and, on the Sunday morning, packed up and traveled on. Each Sunday, the country must have been threaded in every direction by touring theatrical companies, stage managers loading props in the guard's van, producers gloomily adding up the budget, bravely joking and chattering and keeping up each other's spirits as they waited on foggy platforms or clattered past silent goods yards. On arrival, there was no time to look for somewhere to stay. The theater would have the addresses of landladies in the neighboring streets—because there was no time, either, for long journeys to and from the suburbs—who let rooms to "theatricals," one lot going and another lot coming, in the way the tide fills and washes out of a rock pool. The English theater, and its red-nosed half sister, Twice-Nightly Variety, were made possible for a hundred years by this army of theatrical landladies, many or most of whom were superannuated dancers or singers, or the widows of jugglers or conjurors or female impersonators. They have departed—unsung, as far as I know, and unhonored—into the shades of history.

I am the more glad to have known, in Julia, a particularly fine, though late-blooming, specimen of the type. Not that she let rooms by the week. Her cottage was at Shottery, very near Anne Hathaway's, and Stratford-on-Avon dealt with no weekly touring fit-up companies. Her clientele were Shakespearean actors and actresses, who took their rooms for "the season." But they represented the most modest level of the company, mostly employed to carry a spear or make part of a colorful whirling crowd; or they were wardrobe staff, or they painted scenery or did general odd jobs. I remember, for instance, a boy who worked in the wardrobe department, cutting out costumes and allowed occasionally to put in a suggestion as to their design. I never knew anyone, male or female, as deeply devoted to clothes as this youth. There was a gleam of pure happiness in his eye as he talked of the wonderful outfits they contrived. He told me once about the dress they had made for that year's

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leading lady (it was Diana Wynyard): "A lovely creation," he called it, "in stinging cerise." I went to the theater and hardly attended to the play. Every time Diana Wynyard made an entrance, a voice in my head intoned, "a lovely creation in stinging cerise."

At Julia's, one met small-part actors, young ones who hoped they were on the way up and old ones who feared they were on the way down, and stage-management staff, and even people like me; for my friends and I used to get over from Oxford when we could, and during these years, I saw some sort of production of all Shakespeare's major plays. The Stratford Memorial Theatre, though even then a national institution, was not so grand in those days as it has since become; it had some help from public funds, but not on the gargantuan scale it has since come to expect, and in the winter it closed down for months on end. Closed down as a Shakespearean theater, that is; it showed variety and pantomime, and I have stayed at Julia's with red-nosed comics, girl tap dancers, and one young man who went on to become solidly established as a player of the mouth organ (sorry, harmonica). Then there was the pair of male lovers who kept a market garden. (Did their establishment not contain any living accommodation? Why were they at Julia's? Or did they just come for meals?) And there was the middle-aged man with the withered hand and the courteous, cultivated manner, who appeared to live mainly on, and for, gin, and was said to disappear on three- or four-day blinds, at the end of which some policeman would gather up his unconscious body from a gutter. There was the young actor who always referred to everyone at the theater, male or female, as "a screaming bitch" and shortly afterwards crossed the Atlantic and embarked on a well-publicized affair with a Hollywood actress, which made the headlines in the cheap Sunday papers for month after month. And the slightly less-young actor who, worried about his fast-dwindling hair, had heard or read somewhere that nettle stings brought the moribund roots back to life. He used to go out of the front door, walk a few steps to where there was a thick bed of nettles, go down on his hands and knees, and sting his bald dome stoically at least once a day. I have seen him on the stage since, but whether wigged or not I could not tell.

Over this motley, shifting empire Julia presided, and it must be said that one thing her boarders had in common was unwavering loyalty to her. Every human being encounters dislike and hostility sometimes, but if anyone disliked Julia he must have kept well away from Stratford, for I never met or heard of him. By the sheer force of her character, starting with no material advantages—for after all she was just a rather battered woman on the far side of middle age, in a shabby dress and an eye patch, who kept a boardinghouse—she established total authority in her circle. And she did it, as I say, without making enemies. She simply drew you

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into her world; and once you were in her world, you paid homage to her because she was queen of it.

And what was Julia's world? It was, I can see now, a very Celtic dimension. She had the gift of surrounding ordinary humdrum life with an atmosphere of celebration. She loved fantasy and humor, and her chief instrument for projecting them was verbal. Her vocabulary was made up of dozens of ritual phrases. Nothing was called by its ordinary name. In particular the basic facts of existence were given labels that colored them with a mocking humor. To die was "to pass down the tramcar." Somebody with bad lungs was "coughing his soul-case up." The lavatory out in the backyard was "the Palace of Varieties" or more simply "the Palace."

This verbal gossamer became entangled with everything. A perfectly ordinary woman called Mrs. Nichols, who lived nearby, was always "My Lady Nicotine." (The reference is to a now-forgotten book by J. M. Barrie.) If she expressed her intention of going down to The Bell to have a whiskey, it was always "a little whixey-itis." If this sounds arch, I can only say that in its effect it was nothing of the kind. Julia was far too earthy to be arch. Though, speaking of earthiness, I believe it is a fact worth recalling that I never heard her use a single one of the official rude words. The content of what she said may have come from the world of Émile Zola's Parisian back streets and Murger's studios, but the vocabulary would not have offended a Victorian governess.

At first, Julia must have seen me as one more faceless lodger coming in and going out with the tide, but our relationship became closer when she realized that I shared her gift for fanciful talk. On one of my earliest visits, the cottage must have been crowded, because I was sleeping on a camp bed in the kitchen, and was awakened in the early morning by a young cat, barely out of kittenhood, treading warily and delicately over me. Frail, skinny, pacing very scrupulously on long white legs, the little cat reminded me, as I said to Julia at breakfast time, of "a ballerina who was new to the job." Julia instantly seized on the phrase; the cat was known as "the ballerina" for the rest of its life, and I became in her mind an identifiable person.

For me, Julia's cottage, number something, Hathaway Hamlet, Shottery—it torments me that I cannot remember the number, and if I go back to look now, the changed appearance of the place confuses me and I am not sure which door was Julia's—the cottage, I say, held a very special place at the center of my affections and of my imaginative world. What appealed to me was the blend of the rural with the artistic, intellectual, bohemian. I was well enough accustomed to country life, and already my love of the countryside had formed its deep roots, but I had made very few close relationships with actual country people,

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whose talk of crops and the weather and subsidies tended necessarily to exclude me. I knew a number of families who ran small farms on the borders of Staffordshire and Shropshire; I liked and respected them, and they were kind to me; but this was not the sort of ground from which real friendships grow. At Julia's I found a rural environment, a thatched cottage among a cluster of such cottages at the end of a tree-lined lane—and inside the cottage, talk of the theater and books and music, and gossip about wonderfully exciting people, and, yes, even lovely creations in stinging cerise.

Perhaps it all sounds silly and juvenile, but as the French poet remarked, *Tant pis, c'est moi.* That vision of life has remained with me always as an ideal. You can tell everything about a person by finding out his or her notion of happiness. All of us, I think, carry about in the back of our minds a vision of what the truly happy life would be, if we could only attain it. The degree to which this vision is blurred or precise will vary greatly from one mind to another, but I believe it is always there. My vision of happiness has always been a life in which there is the excitement of ideas, the divine rage of art and the self-forgetfulness of the artist, set amid quiet fields and gardens and trees, with a river winding somewhere nearby. I have the temperament of an artist, the absolute need to live my life in a continuum of art and ideas as well as of experiences; but in my century, these things have nearly always had to be sought in the big cities of the world, where noise and haste and crowded pavements give a hysterical edge to life and therefore increasingly to art.

It was not always so. Goethe's Weimar, Mozart's Salzburg, were small, meadowy towns. Shakespeare's London, though it had its dark and dangerous places, must have had quiet lanes where the country people drove their flocks exactly as they did in Stratford. How big was the Florence of Dante or even the Paris of Villon? Great art, great ideas, have flowered from small towns that grew like trees, with their roots in the soil and their branches spread to the sky. I know historically, from the kind of examples I have just given, that this wise and fortunate balance was possible, that it has been a reality in human life; and I know personally, within my own life experience, what it felt like; because that was what life at Julia's felt like.

Sometimes one sees a fisherman's cottage right down on the beach, so close to the sea that one might think the next high wave would engulf it; but of course the wisdom and local knowledge of the builder has put it forever just out of reach of the biggest rollers. Julia's cottage, and Hathaway Hamlet generally, were in this position vis-à-vis the perpetually incoming tide of tourists and sightseers. No one who has been on so much as a day trip to Stratford will need to be told that Anne Hathaway's

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cottage is situated in Shottery, about a mile from the center of town, to be reached either by walking across the fields or going round by the road. The coaches and cars go round by the road, and in those days the road that ran past the cottage was a cul-de-sac; people stopped, got out, and did the official visit, or merely stared at the building from the roadway and crossed it off their list, and drove back the way they had come. The fifty yards surrounding Anne's birthplace marked the end of that particular tourist run. If the visitors had gone another two hundred yards down the road, they would have come upon this cluster of thatched and half-timbered dwellings, all the same period as Anne's, and no doubt their cameras would have been clicking and whirring. But they never did. The next destination was waiting, the next item to be crossed off the list, and the tide, after each toppling wave, receded.

Apart from that one manifestation of the sight-seeing trade, life in Shottery, in the 1940s and early 1950s, was very quiet and untroubled. House prices and rents were still low. The village inn, The Bell, was still an ordinary country pub.

Needless to say, things are very different now. To mention only two changes in particular, the road running past Anne Hathaway's is no longer a dead end; it runs on and links up with one of the main roads in and out of Stratford, so that there is always the sound of traffic; and the Bell Inn has expanded for a mass clientele who would leave no room for a Julia sitting comfortably at the bar with her whixey-itis. Hathaway Hamlet, for its part, has obviously become the estate agent's dream it was always destined to be. Sometimes, now, I walk past that cluster of thatched roofs, protected these days by trim hedges and with its outline changed by new garages. There are the cottages, obviously each worth in today's market a king's ransom, and no doubt full of exquisite antique furniture. It is no one's fault, of course; impersonal forces have done their work, and the good people who live in Hathaway Hamlet today have committed no crime in falling in love with these cottages and buying them, nor in maintaining them at what is now the appropriate level of chic. But something has gone from the world.

I knew Julia well for, I suppose, seven or eight years. During that time my vision of her naturally became clearer and more rounded. I was growing up, and she was revealing more of herself. My first impressions of her were one-dimensional, as a richly funny character, full of quirks and peculiarities, hovering several feet above ordinary mundane life in the same way that Falstaff does. But Falstaff, in the end, is punctured and brought down to earth; and Julia ultimately revealed, to my wondering young eyes, that she was a real woman and not a character from some rich, bubbling picaresque novel; that she had, like everyone else, a

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relationship with the ordinary world in all its dailiness and predictability.

It was, of course, a relationship of adversaries. The ordinary daily world is not friendly to those who live outside its enclosures. At worst it persecutes them into isolation, madness, and death. At best it denies them the solid satisfactions that are its own comforts and compensations. Julia had (evidently) parted company with the conventional world at the very beginning of her life, and the world had, as usual, exacted its price. She had been made to suffer. I never, of course, learned the history of these sufferings, but as I grew to know her better, I had occasional glimpses into the depths of her resentments, resentments that could only have arisen from pain, exclusion, humiliation. She hated, for instance, anything to do with established religion. I must have been staying at the cottage one Christmas, because, although I don't remember anything else about it, I remember sitting in front of the fire on Christmas Eve, listening on the radio to the carol service from King's College, Cambridge. At least, I started to listen to it; but Julia, who was moving about attending to various household tasks, began to show signs of discomfort and nervous impatience. The clerical tones, the soaring voices of the choirboys, seemed to cause her a distress similar to that suffered by a person who can't bear a cat in the room and suddenly sees one come in. "Bosh and bad luck!" she hissed, flicking venomously at the radio with a duster as she went past. "Bosh and bad luck, that is!" She did not actually seize the radio and switch it off, but I could see she was longing to, so I did it for her. To this day I listen on Christmas Eve to that carol service from King's, and to this day I hear Julia's "bosh and bad luck"—the two have fused in my mind into an antiphonal whole.

Then, a year or two later, I was again sitting by the cottage fireside in the afternoon, and Julia began talking about a man she had loved. I remember very few facts about this man and her relationship with him. Perhaps she gave me very few. But she had loved him and they had had wonderful times together. "He had an old Riley car, and we used to go away for holidays, driving about wherever we took a fancy to go." Was the man married? Was there some external reason why he and Julia could not settle down into a regular union, or was it just temperamental? At any rate: "One Christmas he said to me, 'My father wants me to go to Communion with him. And I can't.' I said, 'Why not?' and he said, 'Because of you.' So I said, 'Well, if that's how you feel, you'd better get on with it.' " And that, I was left to gather, had been their parting.

So it came to me, in glimpses, a vision of the thorns that had beset Julia's path, how she had had her heart broken, been denied this and excluded from that.

I thought a good deal about Julia's lover, and his old Riley, and his

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churchgoing father. But the real food for thought came one chilly summer evening when, with the light fading behind the small leaded panes, Julia unexpectedly launched into a long string of stories, each one the case history of some person whose life had been spoiled by respectability, domesticity, marriage. She seemed to have known case after case of people, usually men but sometimes women too, who had lived under such tension in the prison-house of social conformity that they had ended up by going to pieces or doing desperate things. I sat, appalled, silently listening. "They showed me all round their little new home, all set up with this and that and the flowers in the garden and a car in the garage. And I thought, 'He's in his squirrel cage. And he'd give his soul to get out of it.' "

I shall never forget that evening: Julia's voice, drained now of its laughter and self-mockery, lowered to a flat and emphatic timbre, adding story to story of frustration and suffering. Every word entered my ear like a stab. For I, too, was in my squirrel cage.

In recalling, here, my visits to Hathaway Hamlet I have consistently made use of the first person singular: *I* did this, *I* found that. Actually it was nearly always *We*. I had the company, most of the time, of the wife I married when I was twenty-two and parted from finally when I was thirty. I do not want to discuss this relationship beyond remarking that nothing in the whole awful mess was particularly my wife's fault. For me to get married at twenty-two was a monumental act of folly, and it was her misfortune (as well as, to a significant extent, her doing) that I should have involved her in that folly.

Sometimes I look back on that wedding day in July 1947, and try to reconstruct the state of mind that had driven me through all the stages—the proposal, the ring, the banns, culminating finally in that dazed walk down the aisle. It took place in St. Gile's Church, Northampton, a few yards from Northampton General Hospital where John Clare found asylum during the long years of his madness; but he was not madder than I was. "I am; but who I am none cares or knows." Looking back, I feel that that line applied as well to me on that July morning as it ever did to him. What could I have been thinking of? What kind of vision had I, if I had any at all, of the fifty more years I expected to live? I have lived nearly forty of them, and, looking back, all I can say is that I see as little into the mind of that young man as if he were someone else, someone I never met or heard of.

The wedding ceremony—it took about ten minutes, in the almost empty church—seemed to snap this spell. At once, standing in the vestry, I knew the monstrous folly of what I had done. But it was too late. The register lay open for our names; the pen was handed to me with the

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ink wet on the nib. We signed, and a decade of disaster for both of us was under way.

Of the effect on my partner's life, I can say nothing, except that I think of her with total compassion. The effect on my life was, first, to ruin my twenties. My psychic maladjustment found expression in physical illness, and when I look back on that decade I see doctors' waiting rooms and hospital wards. Nor did the distortion stop there, because in my thirties, or at any rate the first half of them, I wasted a lot of energy having the sort of "good time" I ought to have had ten years earlier and got out of the way.

Sometimes I wonder whether my trance-like state, the incredible lack of self-knowledge combined with zombie fatalism, did not result from some kind of deep exhaustion. Between seventeen and twenty-one I not only filled my head with an enormous amount of information, I also reoriented my life and therefore to some extent my personality. After growing up in Stoke-on-Trent, and having no chance to absorb any but the notions of Stoke-on-Trent, I was pitchforked into Oxford at seventeen, and immediately recognized it as the natural setting for my life and endeavors. But there is a snag in that word "natural." If Oxford was my natural place, then Stoke-on-Trent had been artificial, and since it had so totally molded me, I had to break out of that mold, not with any overt feelings of hostility and rejection (if asked at any time of my life, I would always have said I liked Stoke, and so I did in very many ways) but with a long, dragging, unconscious effort, like the effort of a plant to turn round to a stronger source of light.

The quarrel, if such it was, is long since healed, and my two towns now seem to me each to have given me about half of my personality as it is today. But *something* must have put me into that drugged state, and perhaps it was that the long effort of adaptation had left me without the energy to steer a course through the maze of conflicting experiences that life in one's twenties always is.

I can see my wife now on that evening in Julia's cottage, sitting on a chair in the corner, a small dark figure with head bent, listening. And I can see myself, pale and wan, sitting aghast as Julia knocked out the props, one by one, from

The old and bitter world where they marry in churches.

Julia, who had always been a builder of shelters, who had always fashioned beautiful and whimsical structures of fantasy and good humor in which one could pretend to be living one's life, was for that hour relentlessly destructive, heaping up story on story about people who had tried to ignore the needs of their emotions and instincts, tried to make themselves snug little shelters for the sake of safety and respectability

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and then found that the shelters were cages against which they must hurl themselves till something broke, they or the cage or both. . . . I had gone, so often and so eagerly, to Hathaway Hamlet as a glorious playground, and now suddenly it was a house of correction.

I found growing up a long and painful process, so long that perhaps in the end I shall go down to the grave with the process still not completed. But I do at least know when it started: that rain-chilled evening, sitting wordless by the empty fireplace as Julia poured the cold torrent of her anger against settled people and their settled ways.

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The Most Amusing Book in the Language

ROBERT WORTH FRANK, JR.

A quite remarkable one-hundredth birthday is coming up soon in the English-speaking world. Properly celebrated, it would have a guest list of thousands and include a roster of the famous that would give a celebrity chaser heat exhaustion and a name-dropper long-term laryngitis. Early next year the *Dictionary of National Biography* begins its second century of service as the standard reference work for British figures of any note since the dawn of history. Volume 1 appeared in January 1885. Its first editor, Leslie Stephen, had been appointed in the autumn of 1882, and shortly thereafter contributors young and old were working on assignments for the letters *A* and *B*—"Abbadie, Jacques (or James), D. D. (1654?–1727), dean of Killaloe, preacher, and christian apologist," to "Bythner, Victorinus (1605?–1670?), Hebrew grammarian, . . . native of Poland." Not many centenarians have held up so well, putting in full working days at libraries, public and private, all over the world. It deserves a bang-up party.

Famous and revered, the *DNB*, to use the common abbreviation, might seem too austere and remote a presence for a really lively celebration. Better a few solemn speeches, presentation of a wreath perhaps, and then tiptoe away. Nothing, however, could be further from the spirit of this multivolumed patriarch. Honored guests will include the raffish with the preeminent, and the ten most wanted will be more welcome than the ten best dressed. For the *DNB* is the most expansive, companionable, and entertaining "authority" one can hope to meet, interested in everybody and eager to tell you all about "all men and women of British or Irish race who have achieved any reasonable measure of distinction in any walk of life," to quote its own words. And since the "British and Irish race" includes Angles, Saxons, Jutes, Picts, Welsh, Erse, Manx, Bretons, Cornish, Scots, Irish, Danes, Norwegians, Swedes, and Normans, among others, not to mention more recent immigrants of the past eight hundred years, the *DNB* numbers some of the greatest and goofiest people who have ever lived. As a consequence, the *DNB* is a biographical treasure trove, an enormous warehouse for the varieties of human experience, the Homo sapiens supermarket. On several occasions Leslie Stephen referred to it as "the most amusing book in the language." They weren't even halfway through the alphabet the first time he said it.

When in 1900 they did make it through Z—"Wordsworth–Zuylestein"—the Lord Mayor of London gave a great public banquet to celebrate its completion, and the Prince of Wales attended a small dinner party to signalize the moment. The achievement merited national attention. The careers of 29,120 men and women had been documented in a total of 29,108 pages. The sixty-third and final volume was prefaced by "A Statistical Account" (found in volume 1 in later editions), full of fascinating information about the *Dictionary*, some of it verging on the whimsical. For example, one learns from "A Table of Totals of Memoirs in Each Letter of the Alphabet Arranged Century by Century" that persons whose last names began with *B* had the best chance of being included: 3,078 entries against the closest competitor, *C*, with 2,542, followed by *H* and *S*, tied at 2,420. Not surprisingly, "Smith, Smyth, or Smythe" led all the rest.

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Of the 653 contributors, one hundred were described as "regular and voluminous," accounting for nearly three-fourths of the contents. This group was broken down into a special list of thirty-four who had written the greatest number of pages—16,920, or more than half the articles, approximately thirty-eight of the sixty-three volumes. Three stalwarts had contributed a total of 3,518 entries, five and a half volumes in all. One contributor, Professor J. K. Laughton, was responsible for all of the naval biographies: 904, roughly 1,000 pages. (They are among the *DNB*'s best, being vivid, exciting, full of juice.) Another specialist, Joseph Knight, stage-managed all but a few of the 480 actors and actresses.

The end of the trip, however, was only the beginning of the voyage. No sooner was the dictionary completed than work began on the first supplement (three volumes), designed to cover unintentional omissions and persons who had died too late to make their letter volume. December 31, 1900, had been set as the terminal date for inclusion, but Queen Victoria died on January 22, 1901, and it seemed only proper to add her name. The entry ran to 110 pages, outdistancing the one on Shakespeare. The voyage is still continuing, for there have been supplements for each subsequent decade, 1961–70 being the most recent. Work is now under way on the volume for 1971–80.

The problem of bulk has been well managed. In 1908–9, by combining three volumes into one, the original sixty-three and first supplement were slimmed down to twenty-two volumes, grown now to twenty-nine. The present *DNB* totals almost 38,200 pages and contains roughly 35,700 entries. An abbreviated version of the original and first supplement, the *Index and Epitome,* was produced in 1903; there is a *Concise DNB,* covering the supplements for 1901–70, and a *Compact DNB* (like the *Compact OED*) in two volumes, with reading glass. A new wrinkle, a chronological and occupational index, is scheduled for 1985: it will list, within twenty broad occupational categories, and in chronological order by birth, all the names in the *DNB* so that users can study particular occupational groups or a historical period.

Not the least amazing feature of the original monumental achievement was its publication schedule. Though biographical dictionaries began to be projected in England in the eighteenth century, miscarriage was most often their fate. One success, the *Biographia Britannica* (1747–66), appeared in seven volumes; a revised and enlarged edition, however, foundered in 1793 with the letter *F*. In 1856 the publisher John Murray announced a new *Biographia Britannica,* but it never went further than a list of the names to be included under the letter *A*. Leslie Stephen was not confident that the *DNB* would survive beyond the letter *C*.

But an iron schedule was established. Contributors were to return assigned articles within six months; if they did not, the editor was free to give the assignment to someone else. Though publication of the first volume was delayed from October 1884 to January 1885 because of the belated discovery that one article had been plagiarized, what happened thereafter was a wonder. "Since the date of the appearance of the first volume," says the author of "A Statistical Account" proudly, "a further installment, averaging 400 pages, has been issued with unbroken punctuality on every successive quarter-day until the completion of the work. From Christmas 1884 to Midsummer 1900, through fifteen and a half years, the original promise of quarterly publication has been faithfully kept. No similar literary undertaking," he adds with pardonable smugness, "embodying equally thorough and extensive research, and proceeding from an equally large body of writers, has either been produced with a like regularity in regard to the issue of the several parts, or has been finally completed within a shorter period of time." Amen.

The success of the *DNB* was the more remarkable when one considers the size of the regular staff. At first it was only Leslie Stephen and Sidney Lee, his assistant editor. Then occasionally there were one or two subeditors, finally two regularly, and in the last four years Lee and three subeditors. Lee, an indefatigable worker, was the taskmaster to whom the credit must go. He insisted on punctuality and regular attendance by his staff—"draconian rules," said one of his assistants, the historian A. F. Pollard. The freedom and gentlemanly irregularity of working hours enjoyed by Cambridge undergraduates, Oxford dons, and country clergymen were anathema to Lee and inimical to the project's rigid

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schedule. The assistant editors were expected to spend three hours every morning at the British Museum (now the British Library) doing research and checking details, and four hours every afternoon at 16 Waterloo Place, the *Dictionary* headquarters. Weekends began alternately at 1:30 and 3:00 P.M. on Saturday. Instead of the leisurely university calendar of three well-spaced, eight-week terms, there was only a month of vacation in the summer ("which might be June or October," Pollard says, with resignation) and a week either at Easter or Whitsuntide. And finally, horror of horrors, tea was "an unknown interval and luxury at the office" until the volume for *X*, *Y*, and *Z* was within hailing distance, and the fearful trip was done, or almost. Perhaps we can grasp the spirit of dedication that produced the *DNB* only when these indignities have been properly appreciated. They signaled the death of the amateur gentleman scholar, the birth of the professional.

Three extraordinary men are, finally, responsible for the *DNB*, both for its existence and for its various glories: George Smith, its original publisher; Sir Leslie Stephen, its first editor; and Sir Sidney Lee, its second editor.

George Smith (1824–1901) was the son of a self-made Scots bookseller, stationer, and banker. As a youth Smith had been a high-spirited, unruly boy, passing in and out of several schools, and so intractable that one master advised his parents to send him to sea. At last, in desperation, his father took him at the age of fourteen into his office. Here he found a channel sufficiently broad for his energies and a challenge appropriate to his talents. It was a fortunate move all round. Because of failing health, the senior Smith was obliged to retire in 1845 and died the next year. At the age of twenty-two, young George Smith assumed all his father's responsibilities. He proved to have extraordinary business sense and an enormous capacity for work. In addition to publishing, the firm maintained important commercial relations with India. When, as often happened, only a brief time intervened between the arrival and departure of the Indian mails, young Smith would dictate nonstop for thirty-two hours at a stretch, "supported," we are told, "by mutton chops and tea at stated intervals."

Charles Darwin, John Ruskin, and the popular novelist and historian G. P. R. James were among the firm's first authors. Smith enjoyed the services of an unusually talented and discerning reader, William Smith Williams. It was he who discovered Charlotte Brontë. In her *Life of Charlotte Brontë*, Mrs. Gaskell tells of how the manuscript of *The Professor* by "Mr. Currer Bell" arrived at the offices of Smith and Elder. The names of the many other publishers who had been offered and had refused the manuscript were crossed off on the covering wrapper. The unfortunate packaging did not put Williams off. He did his own reading of "Mr. Bell's" work and was greatly impressed. George Smith himself was at first amused at Williams's enthusiasm for this much-rejected unknown, but when another employee, "a clear-headed Scotsman," took the manuscript home and stayed up half the night to finish it, Smith read it in turn and recognized the writer's talent. For commercial reasons they rejected that offering but wrote the author to express their sentiments about the unusual ability and promise shown in the manuscript and to say they would be interested in a three-volume novel from the same hand. Their unknown author was more than ready for them. Charlotte had almost finished writing *Jane Eyre*, and in less than three weeks she sent it to them by rail. They accepted the manuscript at once and published it October 16, 1847, not quite two months later. A major novelist had entered English literary history. Smith established the warmest personal relations with Charlotte, entertaining her whenever she was in London, and she reciprocated by making him the model for the kind and manly Dr. John Bretton in *Villette*. He was not quite twenty-three when he accepted *Jane Eyre*.

This was only the most dramatic incident in the history of Smith's connections with the major writers of his time. Leigh Hunt, Thackeray, Wilkie Collins, Harriet Martineau, Mrs. Browning, Robert Browning, Tennyson, Matthew Arnold, Trollope, George Eliot, Henry Lewes, Charles Lever, Charles Reade, Mrs. Gaskell, George du Maurier, and George Meredith were at one time or another either clients of Smith and Elder or contributors to *Cornhill Magazine*, which George Smith founded (Thackeray was the first editor) or the *Pall Mall Gazette*, a newspaper Smith launched in February 1865 (its aim was "to

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bring into daily journalism as much sound thought, knowledge, and style as were possible to its conditions, and to counteract corrupting influences").

The same George Smith initiated the *DNB*. By 1882 he had amassed a great fortune. Wishing "to make a munificent contribution to the literature of his country," he at first projected an encyclopedia of universal biography. Leslie Stephen, who had been editor of *Cornhill Magazine* since 1871, "saved" him, in Smith's words, "from that wild attempt." Instead, plans were made for a dictionary of British biography. From the start Smith conceived of this as a gift to his nation rather than as a profit-making enterprise. He was resolved "to spare no expenditure necessary to produce a book of lasting value," and he made the *DNB* "independent of any relation between the cost and its recovery." When the dictionary was near completion, Smith estimated that the excess of expenditure over receipts had been £36,000, and that the difference to him, over eighteen years, between sinking capital in that operation and investing it in "remunerative enterprise" came to £100,000. Noel Annan, in his study of Stephen, gives slightly different figures: a loss of £70,000 on an outlay of £150,000.

The original plan for fifty volumes was off the mark by almost 25 percent, but Smith never flinched. The only occasion on which he is recorded as having protested the increasing costs occurred when the galley proofs of one volume in S had been corrected and paged, but the editorial corrections on the sheets continued, and they were finally so extensive that the printers had to reset the whole volume. Even now, in the age of computer composition, publishers will wince in sympathy. Smith supported the first supplement of three volumes, and after his death in 1901, his widow carried out his wishes by meeting expenses for the next (also three volumes). When Smith, Elder & Company was dissolved in 1917, the heirs of the founder presented the copyright and stock of the *DNB* to the University of Oxford on condition that they continue publication. The Oxford University Press now carries on George Smith's public-spirited undertaking. (A memoir of Smith appears in the opening pages of volume 1.)

There is an amusing footnote to this story. That the profits of publishing should support an enterprise of such service to literature and history might seem poetically just, but the facts of the case are, in truth, impudently ironic. We owe the *DNB*, not to the Muses' spring on Mount Helicon, but to one in the Aare Valley between Bonn and Koblenz. George Smith simply had the golden touch. Dining with a friend one day in 1872, he was impressed by the excellence of some natural sparkling water that had just been brought to England. He remarked half seriously that he would like to buy that spring, and a short time after, he purchased the British concession to it. The water proved to be fantastically popular, and it sold widely in Britain, the United States, Europe, India, and the British colonies. An investment of a few thousand pounds ultimately brought Smith more than the returns from all his other business ventures—over £1,000,000, according to John Gross. In sober truth, the *DNB* was floated into the world on a flood of Apollinaris water. Perhaps it owes to that fact some of its extraordinary sparkle.

Much of the life and panache of the *DNB* are owed largely to Leslie (ultimately Sir Leslie) Stephen (1832–1904). Stephen was a leading figure in the intellectual life of the time, though he is somewhat neglected today, recognized more often than not as the father of Vanessa Bell and Virginia Woolf, and as the model for Mr. Ramsay in *To the Lighthouse*. He is quite capable, however, of standing on his own two feet—indeed, more than standing, for he was a prodigious walker (fifty miles a day was nothing to him) and one of the great mountaineers of the nineteenth century. In the days when adherence to the Church of England's Thirty-nine Articles was compulsory for dons at Oxford and Cambridge, he had resigned his Cambridge fellowship, having decided Noah's flood was a fiction, and had come to London to earn his living as a journalist. There he married one of Thackeray's daughters, Harriet Marian ("Minny"), and, on her death, the beautiful young widow Julia Duckworth. By 1871 he was editor of Smith's *Cornhill Magazine*. He is the author of dozens of articles and more than a dozen books. Noel Annan, who wrote a thoughtful study of Stephen in 1952 and has recently edited a selection of his writings in British intellectual history, calls him "the second most important man of letters in the late

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Victorian age"—second only to Matthew Arnold.

Stephen was the master of a clear, terse prose style. Virginia Woolf said of her father's tutelage, "To write in the fewest possible words, as clearly as possible, exactly what one meant—that was his only lesson in the art of writing. All the rest must be learnt for oneself." Stephen demanded clarity and economy from his contributors, and, if necessary, he got it by merciless use of the blue pencil. He marveled at "the inane verbosity of the average contributor. I never knew before," he wrote Charles Eliot Norton, "how many words might be used to express a given fact. I read piles of MS., cutting right and left, and reducing some 'copy' to a third of the original mass." In an essay entitled "National Biography," he observed that "condensation is not only the cardinal virtue of [the biographer's] style, but the virtue to which all others must be sacrificed. He must be content sometimes to toil for hours with the simple result of having to hold his tongue." He admitted, however, that such compression tended to lead to "much clumsiness," and he encouraged contributors to brighten their style. A biography, however brief, should contain the spark of life: "The problem is to condense without squeezing out the real interest." The trick is "to make the facts tell their own story."

This did not mean that the ideal article was to be "reduced to the bare dates and facts capable of being arranged in mechanical order. The aim should be to give whatever would be really interesting to the most cultivated reader, though leaving it to the reader to put the dots over the *i*'s. The writer must often make the sacrifice of keeping his most important reflections to himself; but it is not the less important that they should be in his mind." Under Stephen the *DNB* rejected eloquence, sentiment, and blather and discouraged bias and overemphasis. He insisted particularly that eulogy should be kept within bounds. The policy, one contributor said, was "no flowers by request."

Even more strenuous was the battle for relevance. Antiquarians, those amateurs of historical research in the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries, still loomed large on the landscape. They were Stephen's bêtes noires. As soon as plans for the *DNB* were announced, one of them sent him the names of fourteen hundred hymn writers for inclusion. Stephen defined an antiquary as "the writer to whom any and every fact is of the same importance," in contradistinction to "the writer who sees what are the really cardinal facts." They often omitted the vital and inserted the merely accidental, he complained, and failed to arrange facts in the order or connection that makes them explain their meaning. They were difficult to handle because they were "not so humble" as the average contributor. The antiquary, he wrote a friend, "thinks me an inferior animal because I don't care for the obscurest sweepings of minute information and treats me from a pinnacle of moral complacency. I don't know that he is worse than a poet, but he is nearly as bad."

Alexander Pope had written, "With sharpen'd sight, pale antiquaries pore, Th' inscription value, but the rust adore." Stephen didn't give a damn for the rust; on the contrary, he detested it. He referred to the historical material they had amassed in over two hundred and fifty years of rummaging and ferreting as "the antiquarian bog"; he saw the *DNB* as a "causeway" through "the vast morass of antiquarian accumulation," the "gigantic mounds of shot rubbish"—Stephen is at one here with Carlyle. The antiquarians' material was not, however, all rubbish. These combers of parish registers and writers of local histories of towns, shires, and churches had collected and preserved much valuable biographical information, often in the form of scattered anecdotes and spatterings of gossip. Among them were Thomas Fuller, John Aubrey, Anthony à Wood, Joseph Spence, John Nichols, Isaac Disraeli. The truth is that the *DNB* raided this great cupboard of tasty scraps and used it to its great advantage. That archetypal antiquary, John Aubrey, for example, a walking dustbin of biographical odds and ends, reported that the poet Sir John Denham, during his "distemper of madness" in 1665, went to the King and told him that he, Denham, was the Holy Ghost. Though delightful, it is not exactly vital information, yet the article on Denham in the *DNB* does not disdain to report the incident. Part of the *DNB*'s spice derives from its genial tolerance of the outrageous or illuminating anecdote, often lifted from the antiquarians.

Borrowing a good story was one thing. Giv-

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ing way to the spirit of the antiquary was another, and Stephen was right to exorcise it wherever it threatened to take possession. One has only to spend a half hour reading among John Nichols's *Literary Anecdotes* (there is a convenient sampling in Edward L. Hart's *Minor Lives*) to side with Stephen. All-inclusiveness rather than selectivity is the overriding concern, and though a reader finds an occasional conversation or anecdote to treasure, coherence is lost in ramble, and emphasis is buried under a trash heap of trivia. Stephen saw to it that the biographies were factual, selective, judicious, responsible. The treatment is never amateurish. It is consistently professional. The *DNB*, in fact, represents the coming of age of historical research in Great Britain.

Not all of the duties and drudgeries of editing, however, were congenial to Stephen's temperament. (He was, for example, a careless proofreader: "I have such a gift for misprints as few people can boast," he wrote James Russell Lowell. "I never look at an article of mine after it has been published without finding a bushel.") He groaned, amusingly, to his friends about the burden of the *Dictionary*, but then he was all his life a great groaner. Once, as he passed his children's room on the way to his study, they heard him say, "I wish I were dead, I wish I were dead—I wish my whiskers would grow." It quickly became "the infernal Dictionary." He wrote, "That damned Dictionary is about my bed, and about my path, and spies out all my ways, as the psalmist puts it." He complained to John Morley, "I am knee deep in dictionary drudgery," and to Charles Eliot Norton, "That damned thing goes on like a diabolical piece of machinery, always gaping for more copy, and I fancy at times that I shall be dragged into it and crushed into slips." Responding to these rumblings and roarings within the bosom of the family, his son Thoby, not quite five, one day produced a box he called his "contradictionary," because, he explained, "it was full of rubbish" ("as indeed," says Stephen, "it was").

The truth is he was working tremendously, not least because he knew Smith was losing money on the project and he felt that to ask for more help would be unreasonable. F. W. Maitland, the historian and a close friend of the family, reprints in his biography of Stephen two letters to a contributor explaining why he had cut his article. The letters are lengthy and detailed, models of tact, good sense, and sound principle. Stephen must have written hundreds of them. He also, of course, wrote a number of articles for the "contradictionary," 378 to be exact, a good many of them on major figures, for a total of one thousand pages, the equivalent of two and a quarter volumes.

One sees the standards Stephen was urging on others in his own contributions. His entries, whether long or short, are brisk but not barren. He takes time for pertinent quotation, lively anecdote, and pointed summaries of character and achievement. Consider the force and judgment in the one word *pleasant* in the sketch of "Annesley, James (1715–1760), claimant, . . . the son of Lord Altham, according to one account, by his wife Mary Sheffield, natural daughter of the Duke of Buckingham, or, according to another, by a woman called Juggy Landy [shades of *Tom Jones!*]. . . . Lord Altham was succeeded by his brother Richard, afterwards Earl of Anglesey, in spite of the reports as to the existence of a legitimate son. In order to make things pleasant, the uncle attempted to kidnap the nephew, and succeeded, about four months after the father's death, in having him sent to America and sold for a common slave." The success of Fanny Burney's novel *Evelina* is transformed from a fact into an excitement when Stephen tells us that "Sir Joshua Reynolds took it up at table, was so absorbed in it that he had to be fed whilst reading, and both he and Burke sat up over it all night. . . . Miss Burney expressed her delight on hearing some of this news by rushing into the garden and dancing round a mulberry tree, a performance which in her old age she recounted to Sir Walter Scott." In reviewing the extravagant career of that unbelievably high-minded philanthropist Thomas Day, author of *Sandford and Merton*, Stephen provides hilarious details in abundance, but he does not conclude by making easy fun of his subject: "His amusing eccentricities were indeed only the symptom of a real nobility of character, too deeply in earnest to submit to the ordinary compromises of society." And there is always room for the irresistible quotation, such as the mad prose of Anna Seward, the Swan of Lichfield, describing some land owned by Erasmus Dar-

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win: "A wild umbrageous valley . . . irriguous from various springs and swampy from their plenitude."

Alas, under the strain of overwork, Stephen's health broke down, and after having edited twenty-six volumes, he was forced in 1891 to turn the editorship over to the man who had been his assistant from the start, Sidney (later Sir Sidney) Lee. It had been a most successful working arrangement, like an unusually happy marriage in which the strength of the two partners complemented rather than competed, fulfilled rather than frustrated. Lee was endlessly painstaking in the pursuit of accuracy, was patient, tireless, unflappable. Though his zeal for fact led to articles becoming longer, this was his only flaw, if flaw it was. Stephen had set the pattern for the *Dictionary:* conciseness, coherence rather than factual jumble, readability, clarity of style, a living portrait rather than a swaddled mummy. Lee worked for the highest possible standards of scholarship. He took firm control and supervised the remaining thirty-seven volumes and the supplements of 1901 and 1911 as well. Then, when the *Dictionary* was completed, he characteristically sat down and compiled three hundred pages of errata, which were distributed free to subscribers. He had, however, nothing like Stephen's vitality or color. Responsibility and integrity were his hallmarks. He was one of the first modern professional literary scholars. He finished the job.

The contributors, too numerous to discuss, must remain the anonymous heroes of the great enterprise—or almost anonymous. Articles were signed with initials identified after the frontispiece. One can do worse than pick out a set of initials and follow them through a volume: one finds this writer has a talent for crystalline summary, another is amazingly shrewd in judgment. To have contributed a run of splendid entries in the *DNB* is to have left a small but enviable footprint on the sands of time.

The greater wonder is that the job was done without a large cadre of professional historians to draw upon. Professionals, amateurs, and semipros all swam together in the same pool. The *Dictionary* appeared just as modern historical scholarship was emerging in Great Britain and in fact contributed to that process. The universities of Oxford, Cambridge, and London were not yet training professional scholars. There were no squads of fledgling Ph.D.'s and D.Phil.'s and no learned journals publishing promising articles by hungry young lecturers. Stephen and Lee had to train their own staffs and blue-pencil their contributors into proper shape. The *DNB* provided an apprenticeship for some who went on to make names for themselves as historians: C. L. Kingsford, C. H. Firth, A. F. Pollard. Ultimately the professionals took the *DNB* under their wing, so to speak. In 1923, the bulletin of the Institute for Historical Research of the University of London regularly began publishing corrections and additions to entries. It still does. (The Institute printed a volume of these in 1966.) Happily, even in the additions, stuffiness does not prevail. To the entry for "Allestree, Richard," is added the fact that "[Anthony à] Wood describes him as a 'leane man with a red face,' 'the red herring,' as a waggish scholar called him in 1664." That's the spirit!

Though accuracy is obviously essential in a reference work, so is inclusiveness. Here we meet one of the *DNB*'s greatest glories. It might have been a collection of clichés, familiar names that Macaulay's schoolboy, or an even duller classmate, could rattle off. But no one has 29,120 names (35,700 now) on the tip of his tongue. By the *DNB*'s own testimony they made "every endeavour . . . to accord admission to every statesman, lawyer, divine, painter, author, inventor, actor, physician, surgeon, man of science, traveller, musician, soldier, sailor, bibliographer, book collector, and printer whose career presents any feature which justifies its preservation from oblivion." These categories, though plentiful, are only a sampling. The real importance of the *Dictionary,* Stephen asserted, was not the big names but "the less conspicuous people, about whom it is hard to get information elsewhere. The real test of the value of the book is in the adequacy of these timid and third-rate lives." Elsewhere he observed, "there is also an immense number of second-rate people whose lives are full of suggestion to any intelligent reader." And so, if we come across a reference to a Mr. Davis of Oxford, who took offense at the famous fifteenth and sixteenth chapters of the first volume of Gibbon's *Decline and Fall* (the rather jaundiced account of early Christianity), and who, in

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Gibbon's words, "presumed to attack, not the faith, but the fidelity, of the historian," we turn to the *DNB*, where we find "Davis, Henry Edwards (1755–1784), opponent of Gibbon"—apparently his only claim to fame—and are given the few facts of his short life. A nobody, but now we know. Stephen, who wrote the half-column entry, brings this ghost of a moment alive with his last line: "He is said to have been very amiable, poetical, and patient under suffering."

The *DNB*'s inclusiveness, in fact, becomes a most beguiling, seductive trap. There are so many fascinating people. It may take us some time to reach "Davis, Henry Edwards" because, on opening the volume "Craik–Drake" and heading in his direction, we are likely to sight "Dampier, William (1652–1715), buccaneer, pirate, circumnavigator, captain of the navy, and hydrographer," and we're off. What an adventure story—five pages of it—mutinies, pirating, marooning. At one point Dampier and three companions and a few natives were put ashore on Nicobar Island, from which it was thought they could not escape. But making friends with the natives, they bought a canoe, provisioned it with bread-fruit, and put to sea, "trusting to Dampier's experience as a navigator, and to his pocket compass." It was a long, open-sea voyage, ending with a terrible storm, but, utterly exhausted, they finally reached Sumatra. Two of the men died, and Dampier himself fell seriously ill. With a high fever and his head "so distempered" that he could hardly stand, Dampier tells us, "I whetted and sharpened my penknife in order to let myself blood, but I could not, for my knife was too blunt." Some years later a group led by Dampier marooned Alexander Selkirk on Juan Fernández; and Dampier was also the pilot when Selkirk was rescued after fours years. The biography, written by "J. K. L." (Professor J. K. Laughton, of course), leaves us with a puzzling human paradox. Dampier is rated as an excellent hydrographer, possessing "an almost unique talent for observing and recording natural phenomena" reported in a "clear, easy, homely, common-sense style" that makes his writings "almost classical." But he showed himself "an incompetent commander, whose sobriety, honesty, and courage even were impugned, and whose highest idea of discipline was calling his subordinate officers 'rogues, rascals, or sons of bitches.' "

As we hasten on toward our nobody, Davis, can we bear to pass by "Dancer, Daniel (1716–1794), miser"? Yes, we must hurry, but a few pages later we run into "Dangerfield, Thomas (1650?–1685)," who is identified as "false witness." His story is one of frauds and falsehoods in the hysterical period of the Popish plot, a man after Senator Joe McCarthy's own heart. The climax of his tale sends James Bond's villains back to their tinker toys. Finally found guilty of perjury and "twice pilloried and twice whipped by Jack Ketch in person," he was being brought back from Tyburn in a coach when, "at the corner of Hatton Garden, one Robert Frances, a barrister, accosted him insultingly. Dangerfield replied with foul language. Frances struck at him with a small bamboo cane, which chanced to enter Dangerfield's left eye, and caused his death, some accounts say two hours, others two days, later." Frances was tried for murder, found guilty, and executed. It beats a late-night TV movie by four lengths!

The *DNB* is above all a place where loitering isn't punished as a misdemeanor but, on the contrary, is richly rewarded. Before I reached my unknown Davis, I met a Welsh saint named Daniel, many of whose kinfolk were saints, who was one of the "seven happy cousins" and one of the "three holy bachelors of the Isle of Britain." I also dropped in on both Charles and Erasmus Darwin, and on Edward Davis, another pirate, just two lives away from the "opponent of Gibbon."

One can hardly read any entry without learning something unexpected or unbelievable about people or history. Plots for hundreds of novels grab one by the buttonhole, and not six but six thousand characters pace about restlessly in search of an author. The *DNB* is an incredible record of human effort and evasion, of achievement, bungling, genius, frustration, and folly. The plasticity of human nature is revealed in full display. It is an epic recital of the Human Comedy that suggests that Dickens lacked imagination and Balzac lacked scope. It is a triumph, too, of good writing. There is no more convincing demonstration of how learning profits when it is presented with a sense of proportion and responsiveness to the character of its material, when it is disciplined and coherent, and when it is voiced in a style both clear and penetrating.

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The miracle continues in the supplements. In the most recent supplement (1961–70), the entry for "Jerrold, Douglas Francis (1893–1964), author and publisher," introduces a personality right out of a novel by Evelyn Waugh. And no one should miss the biography of "John, August Edwin (1878–1961), artist," that follows. Then there's Frank Muir's wonderful write-up of the British comedian George Formby, and lots more.

The imagination toys with a gala affair—held in Trafalgar Square? Hyde Park?—at which all 35,700 of the people to be met in the *DNB* appear. That would be a party to crash! But whom to seek out to meet first? I would like to meet the person who comes last in the original *Dictionary,* "Zuylestein or Zulestein, William Henry [Nassau de], fourth Earl of Rochford (1717–1781)," partly just because he's last, partly because, in an odd way, he's the man responsible for the American Revolution (something few of my countrymen know). And I'd like to meet the miser we bypassed earlier, Daniel Dancer. And, probably because nobody else is paying any attention to him, the opponent of Gibbon, Henry Edward Davis. And—and—. But there's no need to rush. They are all there waiting to meet us. The marvelous party has been going on for a hundred years now. Happy birthday, *DNB!*

Old Man Sitting in a Shopping Mall

DAVID BERGMAN

When I was young I gave my love
to what I thought was permanent:
God, Beauty or Eternal Truth.
But now the things that pass take hold
of my affections, and I'm lost
in you, my dear, who even now
are turning into someone else.

DAVID BERGMAN teaches English at Towson State University. His forthcoming volume *Cracking the Code* won the George Elliston Prize.

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Breathing in Bogotá

NORBERT KRAPF

In a crib in the unheated
room above the empty street
where during the day
children lead burros lugging
supplies up the mountainside

you sleep sitting up strapped
in an infant seat, congestion
rattling your chest, as mist
from the humidifier drifts
toward you and drops like
clouds from the Andes above.

In my almost sleep I dream
you are coughing again.
When I count twelve I know
dream is no dream, sit up,
and lunge toward you.

Oh blue-eyed stranger
with the chestnut hair
and complexion fairer
than the climate of these
mountainous tropics, I
hold you, soft and warm,
and listen in the dark
to your rasping breath.

A kind of blind love
and longing and a flight
of thousands of miles
have earned me the right
to whisper these beautiful
words in the tongue
of your ancestors: *Mi niño.*

✪ NORBERT KRAPF is the author of two recent poetry collections, *Heartwood* and *Circus Songs*. He is editing a collection of writings by contemporary American poets about William Cullen Bryant and a collection of materials dealing with the German heritage of his native southwestern Indiana.

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Cyril Connolly and the Man of Letters

ROBERT M. ADAMS

Publishers, like higher agents, move in mysterious ways. A small tide of interest in the late Cyril Connolly (1903–1974) has recently made itself felt. A partial memoir by David Pryce-Jones, supplemented by fragments from Connolly's voluminous journals, has made its appearance (*Cyril Connolly: Journal and Memoir*, Ticknor & Fields, 1984); three books by Connolly—*The Rock Pool* (1935), *Enemies of Promise* (1938), and *The Unquiet Grave* (1944)—have been reissued; and a new collection of his selected essays edited by Peter Quennell has been published. The essays are reprinted from *The Condemned Playground* (1945), *Ideas and Places* (1953), and *Previous Convictions* (1964). Not represented is the last collection, published as *The Evening Colonnade* (1973). What is peculiar about this resurgence is that few of Connolly's contemporaries, and not even all of his memorialists, seem to feel unalloyed enthusiasm for his character or achievements. Pryce-Jones reports, among other judgments, an eloquent three-letter reaction of Rupert Hart-Davis: "Ugh!" Mrs. Woolf, we learn, compared Connolly unfavorably with the less presentable simians; and Wyndham Lewis (who, to be sure, never had a good word for anyone) intimated that he was "a marine growth."

What is more striking, Connolly did not have strong convictions about his own merits—quite the contrary. He made a great point of himself as an artist manqué, a journalistic drudge; his record is littered with unpublished poetry, unfinished novels, and projects vaguely conceived but never even begun. Of all the authors of his day, he was most fertile in excuses for not having accomplished anything. His grandfather should have left him more money, his schools should not have pressured him so hard, his first wife should have married him earlier (or later, or not at all); and, closer to home, he should not have been so lazy, should not have cultivated superficial socialite friends, should not have squandered his talents on ephemeral tasks, should not have let himself become a sponge. All these judgments may have been accurate enough, though perhaps they did not get to the heart of the problem. But why a revival in these latter days?

For one thing, Connolly was a lively and entertaining writer, even when what he wrote was superficial or self-indulgent. For another, he comes at the end of a long and once-great tradition, that of the man of letters. Or was he just the last of a certain sort of man of letters? He seems to have been the last of something because there is no one quite like him in action today. So this renewed flare-up of interest in Cyril Connolly may serve as an occasion to consider the several traditions that formed his life and character, and to estimate their chances of survival in an environment less congenial every day.

The original man of letters, if we take our clue from John Gross's appropriately spacious history of the type (*The Rise and Fall of the Man of Letters*), was clearly an appendage and functionary of the upper bourgeoisie. He was self-appointed and tended to define his functions for himself. He sprang up, early in the nineteenth century, as a contributor to the newly founded quarterly reviews. He took his stand where the publisher's hack met the political commentator, where the public moralist encountered the arbiter of literary and artistic taste. If not a direct ancestor, Edmund

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Burke was an avuncular predecessor. The man of letters might be a lecturer, a satirist, a reviewer, an essayist, an editor, a columnist, or an entertainer; occasionally, he appeared as a translator, a biographer, a popularizer, a contributor to encyclopedias and other collections of useful knowledge; he might be an anthologist or a commentator on literary trends. One of his more familiar roles is that of literary critic or historian. Later in the century he began to have academic ties, serving as teacher or even as scholar; he might write the occasional novel or the slim sheaf of poetry. But to the extent that any particular profession came to predominate, he was less recognizable as a man of letters, whose characteristics are peculiarly unfixed and indeterminate. You could say the man of letters is as versatile as the pen itself, which can be turned to any number of purposes; you could also see him as providing filler material for the insatiable printing press, which from the beginning wanted material not too deep or demanding for the reader's idle hours, not too idle or vicious for his sense of respectability, but capable of widening a little his intellectual horizons. Wherever the more defined professions did not quite fill a popular demand, there the man of letters, a creature of interstices, was and is likely to make his presence felt.

The men who wrote for the early reviews were not, on the whole, officeholders or office seekers (though most of the reviews had clearly defined political positions); they were not hired pens, not publishers' lackeys, nor were they under the patronage of the nobility. Though most of them had second incomes, from a legal profession or from a post in the bureaucracy, as writers and thinkers they tended to be independent. For the most part they wrote seriously, on major topics, trying to persuade a general, educated public. Especially at the beginning, this was not a large public; none of the reviews enjoyed anything like what a modern publisher would call mass circulation. But they could afford relatively generous stipends and equally generous allotments of space. Their readers tended to be men of some leisure, as well as education; and in that oligarchic age they included a great many of "the people who counted." Thus men of letters could exercise considerable influence, not only on domestic legislation, but on the mores and cultural tastes of the society. Most striking was the power of the *Westminster Review*, financed and edited by Jeremy Bentham, which, for all its meager circulation, stirred and directed an extraordinary number of the legal, social, educational, sanitary, and cultural reforms that marked the first half of the nineteenth century.

The time, in fact, was ripe for the peculiar talents of the man of letters. When the established church was under heavy attack from the sects, from rationalism reinforced by material science, when philosophical systems from France and Germany were on the march, when literary standards established for decades were crumbling, and when the industrial revolution was transforming the face of the land, swelling beyond all precedent the proportion of city dwellers—under these circumstances, the men of letters came closest to heroic stature. Carlyle, who was one of them, did not hesitate to make the claim of heroism, at least for others, and only by implication for himself.

A major influence in shaping the man of letters was the educational system of Scotland. While Oxford and Cambridge were sinking probably to the nadir of their intellectual reputations, Scottish philosophers and educators were encouraging in their native institutions a broad curriculum and a vigorous tradition of debate. (Not till after mid-century were dissenters admitted as students to English universities; naturally, they went north for an education, much to their own benefit and that of the Scottish universities.) The reviews, with their wide range of intellectual interests, readily attracted such vital and versatile minds. The *Edinburgh Review* was the first of its type, and Scotchmen contributed in disproportionate numbers to the early reviews. More leisure for the middle classes led to more readers and a greater demand for reading matter. Improvements in the printing press and the postal system made possible wider diffusion of periodicals, partly by way of propaganda, but also in the cause of distributing news and then interpreting it. Thus came about that authority granted to early men of letters, which culminated in the majestic figure of Lord Macaulay.

The decline of the man of letters was a slower process than his rise, but the same elements, in different combinations and or-

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ders of magnitude, brought it inexorably about. Periodical journalism, as it reached after wider and wider audiences, reduced itself to ever more simplistic and sensational materials. The universities, as they broadened their student base and modernized their curricula, produced an increasing flow of educated and self-reliant readers—of Dickens and of George Eliot, for example—who had little need for guidance by a man of letters. Intellectual specialization, above all in the expanding and continually subdividing field of science, rendered hollow all pretensions to general intellectual competence. Economics, government, and industrial policy became the concerns of professionals, not of amateurs, however cultured or well meaning. Thus, as his functions were divided, the stature of the man of letters dwindled. Divested of specialized competencies, he became a reviewer of popular entertainments and thus a light entertainer himself, a gossip columnist with a thin veneer of literary interest.

So far as he avoided this fate, the surviving man of letters was threatened by another, perhaps a worse, one. His residual pretences to being an arbiter of good taste, combined with his lack of real expertise in any particular area, resulted in the image of an aesthetic stuffed shirt, someone who phrased timeworn ideas in pretentious prose, and decided on his own self-conferred authority what was best and what only second-best in the world's literature. His ideas would generally be conservative and "academic" in the worst sense of that word; his aversion to anything novel or disturbing in the world's literature would be instinctive. In short, he would be (as some of his ilk were) a model of the self-important, self-indulgent fuddy-duddy.

Cyril Connolly was unlucky enough to assume much of the burden of this tradition when he entered the world of letters during the 1920s. While he never fully exemplified the type just caricatured—he was, after all, nearly sixty years younger than Andrew Lang and George Saintsbury—the scars left on his naturally agile mind by the authority of this ideal never really faded. At Eton he underwent what his frends and he himself called "an excellent classical education at an old-fashioned English school." (In a less airy mood, he said he left Eton knowing by heart fragments of five national literatures, and professing gratitude for the advent of the Loeb Library texts, with their built-in trots.) In fact, one is impressed mostly by the sheer amount of memory work imposed on young Connolly —not only texts, names, dates, and places, but value judgments and fixed opinions on matters far removed from his limited schoolboy experience. It was an intense, almost violent education, but at the same time passive to a degree. So long as he was under strict discipline, the regimen worked well, according to its lights. Connolly was a clever, malleable boy, with the capacity for cramming of a Strasbourg goose. But Balliol was a less fortunate environment; he got involved in homosexual cliques, cultivated seriously what should have been only a lordly pose of superiority to work, and took a third-class degree.

Had he possessed even a moderate private income, the problem of "what to do with Cyril" would have been less pressing. But a taste for Propertian elegiacs, the philosophy of Aristippus, and the poetry of Nerval hardly qualifies one for most of the jobs available in this workaday world; and that blatant third at Balliol all but eliminated the chance for an academic post. Socially as well, he fell between two stools. He had learned to admire the casual manners, superficial intimacies, and lordly tastes of the privileged classes, and he had a deep urge to emulate them—all that was lacking was the wherewithal.

Money was tantalizingly nearby in the family, but permanently out of reach. On both the English and Irish sides of the Connolly line, there were landed estates and country manor houses, but Connolly's father was an officer in the regular army, and no more affluent than a major's pay implies. Lack of money bothered Connolly deeply. Many of his writings, scrutinized only a little closely, reduce themselves to complaints about the bitter wrong done by society in giving money to other people and withholding it from Cyril Vernon Connolly. For a while he was lucky enough to have a post as secretary to the generous, cynical, and wealthy American writer, Logan Pearsall Smith. Later, he took a well-endowed American girl to wife—he did not exactly marry her for her money, but he was frank enough to admit that if she had not had a lot of it, marriage would have been impossible. In 1939, about the time the marriage broke up, a friend named Peter Watson offered to angel

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Horizon for Connolly to edit, and still later there was a weekly column for the London *Times*. But the money was never enough. For Connolly had expensive tastes—not just for ordinary food and drink, but for intimate little luncheons in swank restaurants, sojourns in the very best hotels, and extended periods of leisure on the French Riviera. At every stage there seems to have been a good deal of cadging. For some tastes and under some circumstances, he must have been a very agreeable companion; he had a ready wit, a wide range of miscellaneous information. People like Berenson, Harold Nicolson, and the Sitwells enjoyed his company. But when he dropped in on the Huxleys, only to be sent away with the pointed remark, "Aldous is *working*," the experience added, he said, ten years to his age.

Before the thought of really creative work—such as a serious novel, an informed book on the English Augustans, a careful study of "decadent" ideas in the late nineteenth century, none of which were beyond his powers at least to attempt—he always quailed. His record is not, alas, littered with the wreckage of a single noble failure, only with a multitude of petty activities, hardly an authentic risk among them. In the first paragraph of *The Unquiet Grave*, he declares flatly that "the true function of a writer is to produce a masterpiece and . . . no other task is of any consequence." That tremendous sentence seems to have been written in advance as a reproach for the life he knew he was going to lead. While proclaiming the highest artistic standards, he made only few and feeble efforts to live up to them, just as he aspired to the life of a brilliant cosmopolite, only to become an inveterate name-dropper and gossipmonger. One of Connolly's favorite diagnoses of his own condition (his activity in this line was unremitting) proposed that he was victim of Indefinitely Prolonged Adolescence. He never really decided what he wanted to be when he grew up, and spent much of his best literary energy bewailing the selves he ought to have chosen. *The Unquiet Grave*, half an anthology of quotations from French Lit., half a dirge over a failed marriage, is the nearest thing to a complete book that he ever wrote (his account of schoolboy life at St. Cyprian's and Eton is the strongest, most solid chunk of writing). In each case, half a book, as if he deliberately left the complaint incomplete; in each case, a cavernous sense of realms of unexplored guilt. The schools had done what schools can do; the marriage failed from weaknesses of which Connolly never doubted he had contributed his share. But the enemies of promise would appear more convincing if one could feel they had been confronted by a more resolute and assured foeman.

Once at least Connolly had the good fortune to encounter a writer who had really sacrificed everything to the creation of a masterpiece. The sight seems to have been a little chilling. He described the life of James Joyce as "one of the saddest and one of the emptiest, except in so far as it was filled with the joys of artistic creation." An empty life indeed, void of everything except the indispensable, all-consuming creative activity that Connolly admired so much in the abstract and avoided so regularly in his personal existence. Indeed, his encounters with the great writers of his day tended to be gingerly in the extreme—reportorial and anecdotal, rather than efforts at critical analysis. That sort of analysis was being done on an unprecedented scale during Connolly's lifetime, but in the schools and universities, and to a considerable degree by Americans. It was, very frequently, hard work. Connolly didn't exactly dodge the hard writers, just the hard parts of them—their texts. He wrote nothing significant on Yeats, Joyce, Eliot, Pound, or Beckett; nothing at all on Mann, Kafka, Valéry, or Mallarmé; nothing on cubism, surrealism, or the changing principles of artistic construction in his day. The disintegration of the man of letters left him occupying the smallest and least rewarding portion of a once spacious and influential demesne. He complained of having to read stacks of hackneyed novels, but what else did your average reader of the Sunday *Times* want to be informed about? He did not complain enough about the literary chitchat and the social piffle, of which his journal is, alas, too full. It is a shame; he was at bottom too intelligent a man and certainly too deft a writer to have wasted so much of his time on ephemera.

If one gathers together different pieces of the same general sort from the various volumes now being reissued, I think it will become clear that the autobiographical writings and the travel pieces provide, by all odds,

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the best of Connolly's writings. The plangent tone of *The Unquiet Grave* gained something from its being a wartime book, one written and originally read at a time when civilized values seemed about to disappear under a dark cloud. His attack on the public schools may not be just (real hatred has to go into biting the hand that fed you), but as writing, it is nervy and strong. After these come the travel pieces, fruits of a lifelong addiction to restless ways. The *Selected Essays* includes admirable accounts of Egypt in 1955, of Bordeaux and the Dordogne Valley. (An early essay entitled "The Grand Tour" is marred by excessive name-dropping and an annoying habit of fliply assigning "stars" to the various sights, as if young Cyril had confused himself with M. Michelin.) Put the best of these pieces together with accounts of several visits to African game preserves in *The Evening Colonnade*, and one has a body of interesting and vivid writing. When he let it respond freely to a landscape, Connolly had a fresh, observant eye, which he supplemented with a fine casual turn of phrase; he makes deft, unobtrusive comparisons and carefully avoids overloading his travelogues with antiquarian lore. To be sure, his point of view is always that of the passing tourist. Impressions were what he was best at—glimpses, ironic contrasts, imaginative speculations. Contemporary wildlife around the picturesque property—the untidy natives and above all his own fellow tourists—he tends to disregard or view with distaste verging on dislike. Still, these pieces contain much vivid and evocative writing.

An interesting side question concerns the extent to which this sort of travel writing has been rendered obsolete by the intelligently directed television camera. By the purest chance, just before reading Connolly on the African game preserves, I had seen a "Nova" documentary on the pygmies of the Zaire rain forests. While the aims of the film were very different indeed from those of the travelogue, the differences were all in favor of the documentary. It was able to take one into pygmy huts, show the joys of gorging on a slain monkey, and bring one along on an elephant hunt—not with high-powered rifles, but with spears. The television film took pains to explain the curious relation of the pygmies with their larger neighbors, and to illustrate their marriage customs. By contrast, Connolly's account of the various hotels he stayed at and the various park superintendents with whom he held discussions could not help seeming rather thin. Here, then, is another instance where the man of letters, with his wide-ranging but superficial curiosity, has been supplanted by the technically equipped specialist.

On a more positive note, Connolly was an entertainer, and a good one. His books, like those of his mentor Logan Pearsall Smith, may not hold up to extended, consecutive reading; but for the occasional idle moment, they are good fun. Even when you're not much impressed by what he's writing about, even when his prejudices strike you as dated and his poses as inconsistent, his prose can fall on the ear like a distant piano skillfully touched. I'm not talking about his satires and parodies here. Perhaps, for those in the intimate family circle of British writers, they were hilarious; modern American readers are likely to find them labored and obvious. (No spoof on Ian Fleming is worth seventeen pages. Dryden would have done the same execution in a pair of couplets.) But Connolly was better as a subtle than as a broad farceur; his prose at its best is as nuanced and flexible in its mockery as in its self-mockery. He had the rare knack of acting on the printed page, and he shared with Professor Bronowski the art of unfolding a bit of common knowledge as if admitting one to the arcana of a secret religion. His best mood is elegiac, even nostalgic. Like most of those who from a modern perspective admire the proud Augustan rigors, he tended to bathe them in a romantic indulgence. Few readers will saunter through the range of Connolly's miscellaneous writings without having their memories touched or their curiosity piqued by a tribute to the art of Petronius's *Satyricon*, a glancing allusion to Nerval's *Sylvie*, or a mention of Voltaire's niece or *The Yellow Book*. For detailed scholarship on these matters, one goes elsewhere; but Connolly was an artist at nudging or enticing one to look further. *The Unquiet Grave* praised Aristippus of Cyrene in such choice and discriminating terms that it was years before I could reconcile myself to the gruff statement in the classical dictionaries: none of his writings are extant.

Where, then, does the man of letters fit into the late twentieth century, and how can he

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excuse his presence? With a fair allotment of luck, economy, industry, and a bit of private income, he can still perform as a cultural vaudevillian. (The term is invidious, and there's no need to name names, but a dwindling few still exist in England, hardly any in crasser America.) But mostly the man of letters fits where he has always fitted—in the interstices. They are perhaps narrower now than they used to be, but there are more of them. For better or worse, we still have writers of political articles, geopolitical thinkers, commentators on contemporary culture—lowbrow, highbrow, and indiscriminate. We have macro- and micro-economists, state-of-the-language pundits, intellectual and cultural popularizers beyond counting. An interesting new offshoot of the man of letters is the science writer, who can combine a series of massive oversimplifications into a rough but graspable simulacrum of the truth—which is all most of us want or can endure. These are hardly men of letters in a sense recognizable to Augustine Birrell or "Q," but they perform a traditional function of the breed, in accommodating difficult and important concepts to popular comprehension. Professors not only do much of the reviewing now, and contribute to the current of intellectual opinion, but, within the classroom itself, they have taken over some of the functions of the old man of letters. Surveys of "contemporary civilization," of "physics for poets," and of "English (or World) Literature" are widely available. It's no unimportant statistic that something like 25 percent of the American population now has some experience of the institutions where these courses are taught. On a wider plane, television series like Kenneth Clark's "Civilization" or Jacob Bronowski's "Ascent of Man" reach vaster audiences than any of the old men of letters could have dreamt of, and they do not oversimplify any more crudely. When we talk, either gleefully or nostalgically, of the demise of the man of letters, we can't overlook the many different shapes into which he has been metamorphosed and diffused.

As for the arbiter of elegant letters, the connoisseur of cultural good taste, he is in fact obsolete if not moribund, and a good thing, too. One of the things that killed him was "an excellent classical education at an old-fashioned English school." A more general and no less insidious influence was cultural relativism. Within a recognized framework of values, it makes some sense to try to decide if this work is better than that; not so, though, when one is trying to compare works with fundamentally different objectives and assumptions. Nobody can put himself in a privileged position above all the cultural diversities. Even at his most cosmopolitan, the man of letters turns out to be as provincial as the rest of us. In a more intimate sense, the privileged position once claimed by the man of letters was eroded by the advent of a literature aiming to create in its audience disquiet, disturbance, anxiety. These are not qualities in which littérateurs can claim to be particularly qualified—saints or pariahs can, perhaps, but not men of letters. More recently, the question has been promulgated whether men of letters or anyone else can interpret a work of literature authoritatively. The most one can achieve, it's implied or said, is a strong misreading (where, not without deliberate duplicity, it's unclear whether "strong" modifies "mis" or "reading").

Of course, if no reading of a text is more correct than any other, there is no rationale for the man of letters, or for texts either. But since deconstructing a "logo-centric" structure of the universe seems generally to involve the counter-construction of an even more entangling cheval-de-frise of verbal ambages—and since, even if one demolished the entire structure of humanist assumptions, people would remain in large numbers, all equipped with the practical capacity for language and urgent needs to exercise it—modes of communication involving speech, written as well as oral, seem a safe bet to survive for a while. So long as they do, many of the functions performed by the traditional man of letters will likely continue to be performed by somebody. Cultural legislators will probably be less in demand than persuaders, but translating from unfamiliar tongues and introducing unfamiliar concepts will not become superfluous until the human race as a whole is clothed in transcendent brightness.

No work that is done in language can be ultimately and universally exact, but analysis of greater and lesser misconceptions will surely continue to take place, on paper, as in fish markets, barrooms, and bedrooms—wherever two or more people get together to ex-

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change those marvelous devices for widening contexts and uncovering presuppositions: "what I meant was," and "what I thought you were saying was." These are the ways that dialogue deepens and discourse disinfects itself. They are included among the first principles of conversation, an interesting word with roots in two Latin forms, one meaning "to turn around," and the other "to live with." So long as men value the examined life or remain social animals, someone with a free critical mind and a knack of civilized communication will be wanted. That was the man of letters at his best, as exemplified by Mill, Bagehot, and Leslie Stephen, or, in the more literary line, by Diderot, Hazlitt, Arnold. In that line of descent, Cyril Connolly will figure, no doubt, as an epigone, but for local historical and, of course, personal reasons: the end of the line he wasn't.

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A Little Visit to the Stalin Museum

ELIAS CRIM

In all his doings, the proud man grew enormously in stature—but he invariably shrank again, until he looked for all the world like a wizened little toadstool. It was rather like the curious visual trick played by that mosaic at one of the Metro stations. I always used to go out of my mind on my way past it because the full-length portrait of Stalin on the ceiling looked gigantic when seen from one vantage point, but when I walked to another place and glanced up from there, he was reduced to a small egg-shaped homunculus in which the neck was indistinguishable from the waist.

Nadezhda Mandelstam, *Hope Abandoned*

The mosaic mentioned here, one that formerly adorned the Arhat metro station near the Kremlin, was removed some time after Khrushchev's denunciation of Stalin's "mistakes" in his famous speech to the 1956 Soviet Party Congress. Virtually all the various memorials of Stalin across the entire U.S.S.R. have vanished (or gone on the black market) since 1956, with the exception of a single region: Soviet Georgia, Stalin's native country. The "khozhayn," or "Boss" (as he was familiarly referred to during the war years), is absent everywhere now, except from his boyhood home of Gori, a bleak little town of forty-eight thousand near the Black Sea. To the American traveler, Gori's Stalin "museum," a unique memorial in several respects, reveals something about local Georgian loyalties as well as the nature of official culture in the Soviet Union. It may also reflect something of what is worst about this murderous twentieth century.

The narrow two-lane "highway" from Moscow south to Tbilisi requires almost a week of hard driving, not to mention nerves of steel on the part of the driver. One must contend with bad to horrendous road surfaces, endless numbers of Soviet military vehicles hurtling past from either direction, in addition to the danger caused by the peculiar Russian aversion to using one's headlights at night (an effort at economy owing to the scarcity of headlight bulbs, it is said). Another, far more pleasant distraction is the countryside: the immense landscapes of grain, people scything along the roadway (near a combine working in the very next field), town lanes with gingerbread-trim cabins, and ruined villas along the way.

Eventually one reaches Ordzhonikidze (formerly known as Vladikavkaz), which is considered the Gateway to the Caucasus. From there, it is another two hundred kilometers along the twisting, rubble-filled mountain road called the Georgian Military Highway. This route leads one through six-thousand-foot-high gorges dotted with ancient stone lookout towers. Dark-faced men of Persian cast tend the flocks of sheep and goats that dawdle across the roadway. Gradually one descends again into the ancient kingdom of Georgia, the Colchis of classical myth, home of Medea and the Golden Fleece—among many other, more recent, ghosts.

This country of fruit trees, vineyards, and sheepfolds was often compared by Russian poets with Italy. It was annexed in 1801 by Alexander I after centuries of invasions by

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Romans, Mongols, Persians, Macedonians, and Turks. Georgia lies on both a north-south axis (between Russia and Iran) and an older east-west axis (between Central Asia and Asia Minor—the legendary "silk route").

Yet Tbilisi, when I saw it several summers ago, remained a balmy city of palm trees and mineral springs. It is no longer as exotic as Tolstoy found it during his army campaigns against the Cossacks, of course. He describes the veiled Moslem women, crowds of Persians in headdresses, Tatar mullahs in loose gowns and turbans, and hillsmen wearing scimitars, all variously strolling the town's streets. Even in 1921, Nadezhda Mandelstam witnessed a startling *shakshe/vakshe* procession of Muslim ascetics that passed her and her husband one day in the bazaar, which she describes in *Hope Abandoned.* Not many years later, however, such sights were greatly diminished after Stalin began his full-scale deportations of the Crimean Tatars and other ethnic minorities to the East.

In our small group of Americans and Canadians traveling in camper buses, most of us had at least some Russian; none of us had a syllable of Georgian, of course. We found a degree of false cheer, as it happened, in scrutinizing a Russian-Georgian road sign: it is apparent that the Greek alphabet lies behind the one used today in modern Georgia. Unfortunately, the language is a southern branch of the Caucasian (or Japhetic) family and is not in fact Indo-European.

Leaving Tbilisi, our group continued driving toward Sukhumi, a resort town on the Black Sea, accessible only by another dramatic but frightening ride through the Caucasus (where Prometheus also suffered, I recalled at nervous moments). First, however, our own guide and chief translator, an American, insisted on a short detour toward Gori, a town mentioned in very few guidebooks and completely unknown to me. Our Soviet Intourist guides, two young women from Leningrad who were assigned to us throughout our travels in the U.S.S.R., made no comments either way about this unplanned diversion.

Gori had a dusty, gloomy look about it that seemed far from Tbilisi's color and vibrancy. We drove in quietly on a late summer morning and parked at one end of the town square. Across the way was a wooden hut surmounted by a marble canopy of some kind. Behind it rose a heavy, rather hideous blond-brown Italianate building, evidently dating from the 1930s.

We descended from our vans and approached the hut, wondering what our guide found so noteworthy about this backwater site. When we had gathered in front of the structure, he identified it as the boyhood home (in fact, the log cabin birthplace of heroic cliché) of Iosif Dzhugashvili, born on December 21, 1879, and better known to the world under his Russian name of Joseph Stalin, or "man of steel." The A-frame shell and the museum behind it were constructed in 1939, the year of the Nazi-Soviet pact, as more than one of us silently reflected. (We later also learned that the official sponsor of this shrine of the "Caucasian Bethlehem" was Lavrentia Beria, Stalin's deadly chief of the NKVD.)

The awful absurdity of the log cabin with its marble "tent" was striking. More disturbed than impressed, we strolled on to the museum proper. "Open 9 to 6. Closed Tuesdays": this is the only comment on the Stalin museum that I have been able to locate in any guidebook. There are no road signs pointing out the place, no mention of it in the Soviets' own tourist guidebooks. That weekday morning we were, in fact, the only visitors of any kind.

An elderly woman admitted us and took a few of our items to the checkroom. There was no admission charge, no souvenir shop. The foyer was entirely and lamentably dressed in pinkish and red marble. A red carpet ran up the stairway to the main exhibition rooms on the second floor. Even the lighting was a harsh red neon. Our American guide quietly pointed out to me the curious electric hum throughout, suggesting that it was possibly a sensing or security device of some kind.

Very striking at the top of the staircase in front of us was a larger-than-life white statue in front of a large red banner. The figure was of course that of Stalin, cast in a heroic pose. Behind him, in Russian and Georgian, the banner read: "My one goal is to be Lenin's best pupil," as if in answer to unspoken accusations that he in fact was something very different to thousands of ill-fated veteran Bolsheviks during the purge years.

Passing on to the next floor, we found three sizable rooms devoted to the Leader's life. The first dealt with his youth and early man-

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hood. Photographs of Joseph in his class at the Tbilisi Theological Seminary are included, although Stalin was expelled very early in his career there. Then there is much detail on the Georgian Communist movement and its organizers: photos of solemn-faced young Pancho Villa types, a large number of whom were later killed in the purges that Stalin pursued with inexplicable harshness on his former compatriots.

The second room was the most interesting, principally for its omissions. A friend stood in front of a photo of several early leaders of the revolution, laughing to himself. I could see nothing amusing about the scene of Stalin and Zinoviev posed beside a few other less notable Bolsheviks. My friend indicated a blurry palm-tree shape next to Zinoviev. "That's Trotsky," he explained, referring to the "nonperson" who had been edited from Soviet history and replaced here with a stage prop.

Of the collectivization and fate of the kulaks, of the purge trials and the national minorities, of the cooperative intelligence-gathering with the Nazis and the nonaggression pact, of Stalin's wife's suicide and the "Doctors' Plot"—nothing. "The Great Patriotic War" (actually the second such war; for Russia the Napoleonic invasion was the first) remains the simplistic official answer to all of the Soviet Union's sufferings. Thus, the "enemies of the fatherland" are blamed for every atrocity, regardless of whether the orders came from Berlin or, in fact, from a dacha outside Moscow. There is no hint that there was, among the perhaps twenty million or more deaths under Stalin's leadership, any executioner other than the Germans. And yet every Russian who lived through that period remembers, among many such horrors, the famine in the Ukraine during the 1930s; but few survivors are likely to know that, according to recent historical findings, one man—the Boss—deliberately instigated that famine in order to suit his own *raisons d'état*. This section of the museum leads one to the "correct" conclusion that the Soviet Union's very existence in the war years hung on the political and military genius of Stalin. ("He was a *diktator*," an elderly Leningrader admitted to us at a picnic table by the Black Sea, "but he got us through the war.")

The final room is a kind of Smithsonian jumble of Stalinist kitsch. Portraits in faience or sea shells, homemade portrait banners, and other state memorabilia attest to the love of the folk for their leader. Napoleon accumulated rooms of such stuff, as do, for that matter, the various American presidential libraries (notably, in my experience, the LBJ Library in Austin). The fervor reached an absurd pitch at times, as when strings of Soviet cities were renamed to honor the great man: Stalinabad, Stalino, Stalinissi, Staliniri, Stalinsk, Stalin-Aul, Stalinogorsk, Stalingrad, and Mt. Stalin.

As I was returning to the ground floor in search of a restroom, our American guide pulled me aside for a peek through the window of a locked storeroom just down the hall, which he had discovered on a previous visit with another group the year before. We could just make out a dusty collection of dozens of busts, statues, and profiles, in various mediums, freestanding and on shelves—all of the same face. Unlike Lenin, whose aggressive pose with outstretched fist adorns every town square in the country, quite a number of Stalin likenesses had been confiscated and incarcerated, as it were, in this small storeroom in Gori, where the great man's immortality amounted to rows of plaster replicas in a dark corner.

Later I reflected on what this museum had in common with others that a tourist might visit in the Soviet Union. Certainly the term *museum* itself has come to mean a great many (and indeed contradictory) things in Soviet culture. The city of Leningrad, for instance, offering almost eighty museums, principally boasts the Hermitage, which houses probably one of the two or three greatest collections of Western art in the world and is itself a splendid eighteenth-century palace. As befits its position as the Russian Louvre, the Hermitage suits (or very greatly surpasses) the average tourist's expectations of a museum.

Then there are regional institutions such as the Cossack Museum in Rostov-on-Don. There is a quaint "gerontological" museum on the Black Sea at Adler. The great Russian authors and musicians have their own memorials in the various museums to Pushkin and Dostoevsky, and in the former homes of Lermontov, Tolstoy, and Tchaikovsky, among others. The Kremlin is also a museum, although it is primarily thought of in its true etymological sense as a fortress; it thus resem-

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bles the Tower of London. At some point, however, the visitor will be directed by Intourist, the official tourist agency, to such programmatic offerings as one of the several Lenin Museums, the largest of which is in Moscow. Its combination of history and propaganda is intended to encourage the cult-like reverence for Lenin among the citizenry with an official fervor greatly surpassing that shown to, say, Washington or Lincoln in America.

A startling discovery in the U.S.S.R. is that Jewish synagogues are sometimes considered museums in a category of state-controlled institutions. (Indeed, all religious groups are required to coordinate their activities with officials of the Party, who are sometimes placed on their governing boards.) Another disquieting touch are the rather shabby "Museums of Atheism," such as the one we came across in Novgorod, a pitiful collection of the rawest anticlerical propaganda from the pre-Revolutionary period, perhaps strategically placed in that ancient city of lovely onion-domed churches as a kind of ideological counterweight. These organs of "culture" are doubtless nurtured by specialists from the University of Leningrad, where Ph.D.'s in atheism are among the possible programs of study.

On the occasion of Stalin's hundredth birthday, an article in the *New York Times* (December 21, 1979) described the refurbishing of the Stalin Museum, complete with a death mask on which a solitary spotlight beam shone in one of the second-floor display rooms. Thus does this museum increasingly take on the features of another kind of official structure—a mausoleum. Standing before that inhumanly white statue at the foot of the staircase, I thought of ancient tombs and Osip Mandelstam's lines: "He has taken away the air I breathe: / The Assyrian holds my heart in his hand."

This notion that Mandelstam and his generation were helpless "Assyrians" swarming under the heel of a featureless tyrant is part of a cluster of ideas Mandelstam formed concerning the Soviet state's resemblance to monolithic ancient empires. Indeed, Lenin's tomb in Red Square plainly suggests a cult of the dead and was consciously designed by A. V. Shchusev to do so.

The Soviet perversion of its museums to propagandistic purposes of course reflects the heavy hand of the state in matters of culture. Official culture in the Soviet Union, furthermore, might even be described as mausoleum culture, given the extraordinary presence of death and funereal architecture in that country. The 470,000 anonymous Leningraders buried in Piskarevsky Cemetery, for example, lie beneath long concrete bunkers and are identified only by the year of death (1942, 1943). Shostakovich's Seventh Symphony is continually broadcast across this bleak setting, just as it was broadcast over Leningrad radio during the terrible "900 days" of Nazi bombardment. The toll of the war years is the major impetus for this cult of death in the U.S.S.R.: a psychological desire, not so much for Lebensraum, as Todesraum.

A remarkable article by the emigré artists Vitaly Komar and Alexander Melamid (in *Artforum*, March 1980) quotes the famous Soviet sculptor and hero of socialist labor S. Konenkov on this point: "The very concept of a 'cemetery' will change. They will be parks of good memories. In them, the grateful descendants will 'recall' those who did not spare themselves for the common good. Young life will seethe around magnificent works of sculpture. . . . These parks will become places of leisure and the pride of every Soviet city." Komar and Melamid argue provocatively for a link between this death-culture and Communist ideas in general. The attempt to spiritualize these atrocities of the state by erecting hideous forms to them is the Soviet culture worship that Osip Mandelstam found so supremely abhorrent. Against such perversities, he posited true architecture (Notre Dame, Santa Sophia) and found it one of the deepest sources for his own poetic vein.

"If Mandelstam stressed the static and stultifying side of 'culture' in this sense," Nadezhda Mandelstam writes, "perhaps he was influenced by the spectacle of a frantic culture worship that was particularly frightening at a time when 'culture' understood in the wider sense of a way of life—the tending of the fields, the building of homes, a means by which people lived together in amity—was becoming extinct; he saw it, in other words, against a background of the utter degradation of our daily life." What came to replace this "way of life"—which was nothing other than

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the greater part of Western tradition—was a synthetic ideology that misused the older cultural symbols to attempt somehow to validate its own violent history. In no other country, perhaps, has this program been undertaken with such terrible consequences. No more heroic and important witnesses to this career of destruction can be found than this remarkable poet, Osip Mandelstam, and his equally extraordinary wife, Nadezhda.

Standing in front of the shrine to the Boss in Gori, an American is forcibly confronted with the apparatus that destroyed Mandelstam's life and attempted to bury his work. Official Soviet culture is indeed a kind of marble shell that exists not to protect but to alter whatever we see within it. The Soviet state has learned that memory can be distorted more easily than eradicated, especially if the distortions are carried out with high-sounding phrases. On the dusty town square of Gori, one must blink one's eyes twice at this "museum" from which the Muses not only are absent but have been replaced—with plaster-of-Paris replicas.

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The Record of the Losers

A Consideration of Pietro Giannone

HAROLD STONE

Naples, a noisy, crowded city, sprawls alongside the Mediterranean, rising above a bay unsurpassed in beauty and grace. The hurly-burly of its streets, the swarms of its people have been characteristic since antiquity. The old quarters of the city evoke the illusion of being an inhabited version of neighboring Pompeii. Naples was founded by colonists from the Greek city of Cumae in the fifth century B.C. Pride in this Greek origin has encouraged Neapolitans to regard themselves as the representatives of a Greek cultural tradition distinct from the traditions of Rome and northern Italy. In contrast to these claims of intellectual independence, the political history of the region is one of nearly unrelieved submission to foreign invaders. In consequence, the task for Neapolitan historians has been to choose the most exemplary among the conquerors.

The most influential history of Naples is Pietro Giannone's *Istoria civile del regno di Napoli*, first published in 1723. In the eighteenth century Giannone was known as an "intrepid defender of the rights of man"; his history inspired many projects of social and legal reform in both northern and southern Italy. A popular work, the *Istoria* was promptly translated into English, French, and German. European scholars recognized the significance of Giannone's study of Naples, its contribution to historical method, and its analysis of public administration and bureaucracy; and there is still an awareness of the significance of Giannone's work in Italy today. Giannone, taking the Kingdom of Naples as his example, showed how the great national states of western Europe had risen out of the collapse of the Roman imperial order.

It is indicative of the present myopic view of the eighteenth century that Giannone's work and his martyrdom for the sake of freedom of thought are so little known in this country. Yet it is surprising that this should be so. Although in the eighteenth century Naples was no longer the most populous city in Europe, as it had been in the sixteenth century, still it was among the largest. Naples was famous for its religious festivals and masquerades, which seemed to draw the entire population into the streets. Music thrived in this carnival atmosphere; it was in Naples that the compositions of Alessandro Scarlatti and Giambattista Pergolesi gave a new and distinctive form to the comic and tragic opera of the day. Their works made Naples the opera capital of the world. In the scientific disciplines Neapolitan scholars saw themselves continuing the traditions of their countrymen, natural philosophers of the late Renaissance, Bernardo Telesio, Giordano Bruno, and Tommaso Campanella. In this same milieu Giannone's cantankerous contemporary, Giambattista Vico, wrote his *New Science* of poetry, language, and history.

Giannone was born in 1676, the eldest son of a shopkeeper; he grew up on the Kingdom's eastern coast near Mount Gargano. In 1694, following the route of many of his compatriots, Giannone went to seek his fortune in Naples by becoming a lawyer. His abilities brought him to the attention of the best teachers and introduced him to the most powerful lawyers of the city. The legal profession prom-

HAROLD STONE is completing a book on seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Neapolitan intellectual history.

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ised lucrative rewards, but Giannone's interests turned in a different direction. While he took on enough cases to provide himself a livelihood, he concentrated his energy on the composition of a history of Naples. Because of its delicate and controversial subject matter, Giannone cultivated an unobtrusive and secluded style of life. This reclusive existence came to an abrupt end in 1723 with the publication of *Istoria civile del regno di Napoli.* (*Istoria civile* has been frequently republished since the eighteenth century. The most recent edition is in seven volumes edited by Antonio Marongiu and published by Marzorati of Milano in 1970. The only English translation of *Istoria civile* is the 1729 translation of James Ogilvie.)

The theme of his work was the foundation of the Kingdom of Naples as an independent political state. Giannone recognized that this had been the accomplishment of the Angevin kings, who had first ruled Naples in the second part of the thirteenth century. However, the circumstances behind this achievement, the Angevin dependence upon the papacy, suggested that the authority of the Neapolitan sovereign was subservient to the will of Rome. Charles I of Anjou, the first of his family to rule in southern Italy, had had no prior dynastic claim to the region. The justification and impetus for his seizure of Naples was the investiture of the kingdom he had received from the pope. He accepted the investiture, although Manfred of the Hohenstaufen family was recognized as the ruler of Sicily and southern Italy. Charles destroyed Manfred and his army in battle; subsequently, at Charles's command, the last of the Hohenstaufens, the young Conradin, met an ignominious death—he was beheaded in the marketplace of Naples.

Papal investiture of kingdoms was not new in the thirteenth century, but it had never brought about such a profound political revolution. In less than a decade the popes had extinguished the Hohenstaufens, who, until then, had been the most powerful family in Europe. The reverberations from their destruction were profound: only in Dante's vision of Purgatory did the major figures of this drama attempt reconciliation. This astounding transfer of political power questioned the fundamental character of Neapolitan kingship. If papal authority could depose the Hohenstaufen rulers, how could the Angevins have any certainty of their own rights? And, did this not imply that the papacy was the real political power in southern Italy? Such questions had been debated by generations of Neapolitan lawyers. The aim of their scholarship was to show that the papal investiture did not effect royal authority. With a single-minded erudition they researched the first papal investiture granted to the Normans in the eleventh century, traced its history to the present, and analyzed the meaning of investiture in the context of feudal law. Giannone's contribution was to describe these arguments from a new point of view, that of the idea of sovereignty. The consequence of this approach was that Giannone developed a new method of historical analysis.

The idea of studying sovereignty was not new with Giannone. It had been the dominant theme of seventeenth-century political philosophy; Jean Bodin, at the end of the sixteenth century, had already perceived its importance. Bodin believed that the greatest defect of ancient political theory was the failure to treat this subject. Accordingly, the traditional concerns of the ancient philosophers—discussions on the best regime, and evaluations of the respective merits of monarchy, aristocracy, democracy, and various forms of mixed constitutions—all these were irrelevant or side issues to the basic problem for the political philosopher: the definition of sovereign power. Thomas Hobbes earned a reputation for his unflinching encouragement of the sovereign to exercise fully the power of the state to insure political stability. The idea of sovereignty, for Hobbes, was deduced from abstract principles of natural law and natural right. This dogmatic definition of sovereignty, which considered the rights of sovereignty to be the foundation and basic principle of government, created a new attitude toward the purpose of political philosophy. For Hobbes sovereignty was a principle essential for any formal social organization; thus, its nature was independent of any particular historical circumstances or traditions.

Giannone realized that it made neither good historical nor legal sense simply to measure Neapolitan sovereignty by the rights and properties Hobbes had deduced. From his study of ancient and modern constitutions, Giannone had concluded that the principles

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of sovereignty were not, as Hobbes had thought, immutable. In order to apply Hobbes's conception of sovereignty, one needed to bend the rigidity of his philosophic system. The rejection of the idea that sovereignty was an absolute principle prepared the way for its historical study. While Giannone lost some of the precision and simplicity that made Hobbes's conception so attractive and powerful, this approach raised new questions and suggested new subjects of study that had been precluded by Hobbes's principles. Giannone turned from the traditional concerns of political history—the stories of great families and wars—to the more abstract problems of the history of institutions. He called his new method *Istoria civile*, "civil history." In practical terms this meant his history was concerned with the distribution and administration of political power, that is, how a sovereign implements his power. In other words, he needed to analyze governmental procedures and the structure, development, and distribution of public offices.

The methodological consequences of Giannone's transformation of tradiation political history into the history of legal practice and civil administration is evident from his footnotes. Giannone relies on the erudition of Neapolitan antiquarians to describe the composition of Naples's political structure in different ages. He consulted Camillo Pellegrino, Marino Freccia, Camillo Tutini, Bartolomeo Chioccarelli, Nicolò Toppi, Luigi Nicodemo, and others. They had compiled lists of officeholders, ecclesiastics, and nobles with their special titles. Based on the research of these antiquarians, Giannone tried to make a systematic description of the duties and powers of public officials under each of the rulers of Naples. He saw the distribution of governmental offices and privileges as a concrete manifestation of sovereign will. Through this approach Giannone learned that bureaucratic structures possess a greater endurance and continuity than the dynasties of kings. Even the complete change of sovereign families did not halt or overturn the continuity that characterized public administration. He found influences of imperial Rome that lasted into the Middle Ages and beyond. Such subjects as public administration had previously been solely the worry of the antiquarian; Giannone, by analyzing them from the perspective of sovereign power, made the structures of institutions and bureaucracy the subject of historical investigation.

Giannone describes the history of a public office not only in terms of its function in an administrative system; he also recognized that its character and role changed as a consequence of conflicts with subordinates, rivalry between the highest officers, the jealousy of the barons, foreign invasions, etc. For example, the office that the Normans called the Grand Protonotary continued the function that had been fulfilled in the Roman imperial administration by the *Primicerius Notarium*. The new title "protonotary," taken from the Greek, indicated the influence of the Byzantines who had ruled in southern Italy for centuries. In the Norman kingdom the Grand Protonotary had a tremendous power and authority; being responsible for the registration of all new laws, he affected all aspects of public business. He controlled all official documents reviewed by the king. In the course of time, to handle the magnitude of work, the office of Vice Protonotary was created; but, soon, controversy arose over their respective duties and privileges. In the fifteenth century King Alfonso of Aragon created the Tribunal of Santa Chiara (it acquired its name from its meeting place) and delegated many of the duties of the royal notaries to this body. Alfonso insisted that he did not intend this tribunal to diminish their authority, and he granted the notaries preeminence over the president of the tribunal when they attended its sessions. However, they eventually lost this prerogative to the president. In Giannone's day the office of Grand Protonotary was merely honorary; his distinction was to wear purple, and his privilege was to sit at the right of the Grand Admiral at the Parliament.

The distribution of public employments was one aspect of sovereign power; the right to make laws was another. Laws could continue to have influence long after a king's reign and that of his dynasty. And, if a law became part of traditional legal or social practices, its authority acquired that of a custom. Thus, for example, the political authority of the Lombards disappeared with the destruction of their kingdom; but their law codes provided the precedent for the feudal law adopted by the Normans and Angevins. When the vestiges of old laws disappeared, place-

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names, ceremony, and ritual preserved connections with the oldest traditions. In one of the last chapters of *Istoria civile*, Giannone describes the funeral in 1689 of a queen, Marie Louise of Orleans, the wife of Charles II of Spain. In the pageantry Giannone showed evidence for Naples' continuity with its oldest traditions: "Two large squadrons took position in separate parts of the city: one, being of infantry, was placed in the square before the Royal Palace; the other, infantry and cavalry, stood in the square next to the Church of Santa Chiara. On their helmets were bands of mourning, and they held their weapons upside down. This conformed to customs of the most ancient times transmitted to us by the Greeks and Romans, who, in their funeral marches, turned the points of their spears to the ground and held their shields backwards." Naples' past, its remote history, survived in fragments that were still part of daily life. As Giannone brings his history to its conclusion, he reminds the reader that the past not only shadows but informs the present.

While his methodology led him to study the history of social and political institutions, the continuity of his book concerned the relation of the Neapolitan sovereign to the papacy; or, to be more candid, how Naples had been crippled by its relationship with the Church and unable to take its rightful place among the powers of Europe. Giannone described in detail the numerous attempts of the papacy to subvert, as he saw it, the independence of the Neapolitan sovereign. He had no illusions that the Church would countenance or even tolerate the expression of such ideas; he therefore made sure that all four volumes of his history appeared at the same time, lest the entire publication be squelched with the first volume. The events justified his fears. Giannone and his publisher, Niccolò Naso, were excommunicated; *Istoria civile* was added to the Index. Besides these formal denunciations, Brothers and monks incited the Neapolitan mob against Giannone. They insinuated that the customary miracle performed by Saint Gennaro, the patron saint of Naples, would not occur as expected on the first of May because of Gennaro's anger at Giannone. The miracle, the instantaneous transformation of a flask of the saint's coagulated blood into liquid, was deemed an augury of good fortune; the failure to liquefy was an omen of impending disaster.

The rage of the crowd imperiled Giannone's life; his friends obtained a passport so that he could seek sanctuary in Vienna, the residence of the current sovereign of Naples. They arranged a clandestine departure by coach to Barletta. Although he traveled under an assumed name, he could feel little security, for at every stop he was greeted by questioners seeking news from Naples about the diabolical Giannone and the liquefaction of Gennaro's blood. Giannone reached the Adriatic safely and, before embarking, learned that Gennaro had once again worked his miracle.

Despite the notoriety that accompanied Giannone to Vienna, he managed to find a position at the imperial court. In 1724 he was appointed as an adviser on Sicilian law. This sinecure allowed him the leisure to research a new subject: a history of the spiritual values of Christianity. At this time Vienna was an excellent place for this project, for here Giannone had access to the most recent scholarly and polemical works on ancient Judaism and Christianity. He encountered the biblical criticism of the Deists and freethinkers, whose works were not as easy to come by in Naples. Giannone knew the fundamental problems and controversies in current biblical scholarship from his education in Naples, and particularly from his teacher Domenico Aulisio. Aulisio, a professor of civil law, had written on the development of the educational institutions of the Hebrews and early Christians. Giannone's work, in its broad outlines, followed the approach of Aulisio. But, unlike his teacher, he was untrained in Hebrew and Greek and thus was unable to attempt original philological work on the Bible. Giannone was not a scholar of the problems of textual criticism: his interest was to use the historical approach he had developed for the study of civil institutions as a way of understanding the social organization of the Christian religion.

In Vienna, Giannone had access to the writings of the English Deists and the latest works of biblical scholarship. The Deists were developing a new approach to theological studies: instead of viewing Christianity as unique and the only valid faith, they believed religion to be a universal response to human needs. Building upon the biblical criticism of Hobbes, Spinoza, and Simon, the Deists made

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the idea of natural religion the center of theological controversy. Works such as John Toland's *Christianity Not Mysterious* (1696) and Matthew Tindal's *Christianity as Old as the Creation* (1730) argued that the Christian faith was rational in its essence and that on all fundamental issues both natural and revealed religion were in harmony. Giannone was in sympathy with the idea that all religions reflect an authentic truth about the human spirit, but he avoided the bland moralizing typical of the Deists.

Giannone records in his autobiography, *Vita scritta da lui medesimo*, that he began in 1731 to write a new work on the Bible and its interpretation entitled *Il triregno*. The three kingdoms of the title refer to the kingdom of the Hebrews, the kingdom of Christ, and the kingdom of the popes. An advocate of materialist philosophy, Giannone, in his analysis of the Bible, follows the libertines and the so-called freethinkers. The religious principles that he discovers in the Pentateuch, the Book of Job, the Psalms, and the Prophets correspond to the principles of natural religion that he had found in the oldest known gentile writings, the Homeric epics. In both, there was a naive materialism that accepted corporeal reality as the only reality; among these primitive people there was no conception of an immaterial substance or an immortal soul. In part 1, which covers the kingdom of the Hebrews, Giannone makes a lengthy excursus showing that this naive materialism was not contradicted by the discoveries of the scientific materialism of his own day. No spiritual substance had ever been found in any living thing.

Giannone's primary interest was not in the Deists' notion of natural religion but in the validity of the doctrine of the immortality of the soul. In his view the idea of personal immortality did not have a serious impact upon the Hebrews until they came in contact with the values of Hellenistic culture. They did not adopt the Greek idea of an immortal soul; however, they did alter the content of their own religion by adding the expectation of the resurrection of the dead. Even so, materialism remained at the core of their faith; they believed this resurrection to be a bodily resurrection that would occur at the end of time. In part 2 of *Triregno*, covering the kingdom of Christ, Giannone argues that these same doctrines were taught in the New Testament by Jesus and Paul. When Christ preaches the coming of the Resurrection, he makes no mention of the immortal soul. No one asks Lazarus where his soul had traveled in the interval between his death and his return to life for the simple reason that none of the people of Palestine to whom Christ preached believed the soul to be immortal. Based on his reading of the New Testament, Giannone claimed that the idea of an individual spiritual immortality was not part of the original Christian teaching.

This radical interpretation of the Bible had a significant place in the development of libertine thought. To be sure, the outline of the argument was not new; Hobbes, too, had proposed that the soul was not immortal and earned his reputation as an atheist. Hobbes's intent was to diminish the authority of the clergy and make them servants of the sovereign's will. Giannone, sympathetic to this purpose, uses the idea of the immortal soul to explain the historical development, the organization, and the political power of the papacy. This study of the papacy was to be the subject of part 3 of *Triregno*. Previously, in *Istoria civile*, Giannone had studied the papacy in terms of its encounter with the Neapolitan state; here the historical approach, which he had developed for the study of civil institutions, is used to analyze how the idea of the immortality of the soul built the papacy, that remarkable and unique form of government.

Although Giannone never finished the third part, its general conception and character can be understood. Giannone was not very concerned with the old staple of ecclesiastical history: the many doctrinal controversies and the subsequent heresies that grew up in the early Church. These were just surface phenomena, as it were, that distracted from the more basic issue, the development of the Christian faith into a social, political, and religious institution. Of particular interest to Giannone is the change that ideas undergo when they are incorporated into the fabric of a social organization. Not only do the ideas affect the institutions, but the nature and demands of institutions transform the ideas. The Christian faith and the papacy as social organizations were not exempt from this general principle.

In Giannone's view the papacy was a

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unique form of government. Its authority did not depend on the relation of rights to duties, which were the usual bonds between sovereign and subject. The peculiar power of the popes over the Christian world was the consequence of a political and ideological development. Giannone noted that by the second and third centuries the Christian faith had long outgrown the simple organization begun by the Apostles. A hierarchy of priests and bishops had developed that gradually came to imitate the Roman imperial administration. This form acquired a kind of legitimacy with the conversion of Constantine. Parallel to this change was an ideological one. As Giannone saw it, the first Christians lived in the immediate expectation of the Second Coming; however, as the Church acquired its temporal administration, the demands arising from this new organization resulted in a shift of emphasis in religious belief. Instead of the *eschaton*, the crucial issue for the faithful became the immortality of the soul. Along with the creation of the ecclesiastical hierarchy on Earth, a new spiritual bureaucracy stratified the geography of Heaven, Hell, and Purgatory; this structure gave new meaning and new fears to the belief in an immortal soul. And the popes, on the presumption that they could intercede for individual sinners, built a vast spiritual empire upon this belief.

The significance of these developments did not become clear until the collapse of the Western Empire. While the civil officials disappeared in the wake of the barbarian armies, the bishops remained. The clergy, whose organization had copied that of the Empire, did not disappear but took on a life independent of their imperial model. The structure of the Church proved to be of great versatility, easily adapting itself to the values, desires, and expectations of not only Greek and Latin Christians, but also the new barbarian converts. Papal authority remained a viable and powerful principle of order until the advent of Protestantism and the national state.

Giannone's contribution to Enlightenment historiography was distinct from the general attitudes taken up by the libertines and Deists. The Deists wished to transform Christianity into a rational, natural religion; the libertines considered Christianity as a variant form of paganism. Voltaire, popularizing Spinoza, reduced Christian and Hebrew history to the common level of gentile history; and Gibbon viewed the success of the Christian faith as a sort of universal lapse in taste. The tendency of these attitudes was to consider Christianity as a form of organized superstition whose spirituality was no different from the idolatry of the Olympian gods. Giannone's addition to this critique of religion was to show that, regardless of how one judged its subsequent history, Christianity had brought something new to the moral, political, and social values of mankind. His aim was to describe the exchanges between Christian and pagan—the influence of pagan philosophy on Christian theology, the impact of pagan customs on Christian religious practices, and the use of Roman imperial bureaucracy as a model for the organization of the clergy.

However, Giannone's *Triregno* was not known in the eighteenth century. Early in its composition, when the Austrians surrendered Sicily and Naples to the armies of Spain, Giannone lost his position as an adviser on Sicilian law. Southern Italy was conquered by the Bourbons in 1734 during the War of the Polish Succession. Unwilling to beg for another position and remain a burden to the emperor, he sought to return to Naples, which had become, after centuries of domination, an independent kingdom. He traveled with several compatriots to Venice where they hoped to obtain permission to return to Naples. Although this was granted to many, Giannone was not allowed to return home. Good fortune came his way despite this disappointment. Wealthy Venetian citizens volunteered to be his patron. Nevertheless the Church did not leave him at peace. The Jesuits accused him of holding heretical beliefs and of being an enemy of the Venetian state. Giannone answered these charges, but the Church remained unsatisfied. Later, while returning to his Venetian residence on a September evening in 1735, he was surrounded by an armed gang who arrested—or rather abducted—him. Giannone was taken before the Venetian Inquisition. After a summary trial he was expelled from Venice and marooned with a few possessions on the banks of the Po in Ferrara, a papal province. He eluded the attempts of papal agents to capture him. Using an assumed name he managed to reach Modena, where he met with the scholar and historian of the Italian Middle Ages, Ludovico Muratori.

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From there he fled to the safety of Geneva in Switzerland.

Giannone reached Geneva in early December 1735. Geneva was a reasonable place for him to go. Jacques Vernet, who was preparing a French translation of *Istoria civile*, lived there. Giannone would be able to supervise this work; he planned to add another volume to the Italian text. At this time Geneva still had the reputation of being a place where Catholics made an open profession of their conversion to Protestant beliefs. Giannone, it seems, had no intention of changing his faith. It was his adherence to Catholicism that proved his undoing. With the approach of spring, a man by the name of Gastaldi persuaded Giannone to fulfill his Easter duty on Italian soil in neighboring Savoy, which was then ruled from Turin in Piedmont. Gastaldi turned out to be an agent of the Piedmontese government. Giannone and his son Carlo crossed the border to hear Mass on Palm Sunday; however, their escort betrayed them, and they were captured at bayonet point in the middle of the night, while asleep in their lodgings. At first Giannone thought they were held by robbers, but the nature of the plot became clear when he learned that this armed band was under the orders of Charles Emmanuel III, who ruled Savoy, Piedmont, and Sardinia. This time there was no opportunity for escape; Giannone remained a political prisoner of the court of Turin for twelve years until his death in 1748. While he was not handed over to the papacy or to an ecclesiastical court, he remained a victim of power politics, the price paid for harmony between Rome and Turin.

Triregno was not on Giannone's person when he was arrested. So great was the fear of this work that the Church went to great expense to impound all copies of it. With a fortunate but sanctimonious thoroughness they preserved them as evidence. In the form that we possess *Triregno*, Giannone had nearly completed a draft of the parts on the Old and New Testaments, the third section on the papacy is briefly outlined, but the completed text breaks off in the Age of Constantine. Although the work was printed at the end of the nineteenth century, it was not until 1940 that Alfredo Parente published a learned and usable edition of *Triregno* from the manuscripts known to him.

Of course, in prison Giannone was not permitted to continue *Triregno*; nor was he allowed to work on his revision of *Istoria civile*. He was permitted a limited number of books. In his cell he continued the scholarly research that had been his life. Coming to grips with the reality of his arbitrary and indefinite arrest, Giannone set his intellectual house in order by explaining his career in an autobiography. Then, with what must have required tremendous mental effort and discipline, Giannone began a new series of works that continued the general concerns that were to have been studied in *Triregno*. First he composed a commentary on the *Annals* of Livy; his emphasis was on the character of Roman religion and its relation to other ancient religions, especially that of the Jews. In his next book, *Apologia de' teologi scolastici*, he turned to the beliefs of the early Christians and the Fathers of the Church. Then, continuing his interest in the papacy, he wrote on Pope Gregory I, the first pope to exercise political sovereignty in Rome. His last work in prison was a series of essays, which he composed during the years from 1742 to 1744; afterward his health did not permit sustained intellectual activity. As with *Triregno*, all of his prison writings were preserved, but they had no circulation. In the middle of the last century, some parts of these works were published, but the edition was erratic, making it difficult to understand Giannone's meaning and intention. At last, in our own time, Giuseppe Ricuperati has shown that Giannone was much more than the historian of Naples. (In numerous articles and books, Ricuperati has shown the significance of *Triregno* and Giannone's prison writings to the theological studies and debates of the early eighteenth century.)

The fate of Giannone was a tragic loss to his intellectual contemporaries. He had taught, contrary to the libertine spirit of his age, that the religious spirit was a response to authentic human needs and that these needs, in turn, affected the development of history. Unable to complete this investigation in prison, he turned his thoughts to the study of comparative religion. He outlined this project in the conclusion of his *Istoria del Pontificato di Gregorio Magno*; however, the loss of intellectual freedom and inadequate scholarly re-

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sources deprived him of the energy and encouragement needed for such a vast study. The final form of Giannone's application of historical methods to religion remains imprecise; but from the writings he completed, we can recognize his intent to make the complexities of religious experience the subject of learned and historical inquiry. His new approaches to religion were part of his lifelong concern with explaining the proper relation between Church and State. He sought to determine the nature of power and authority in Church and State in the hope that their functions could be responsibly distinguished and their humanitarian aims harmonized. Sacrifice and suffering were exacted from Giannone in payment for his attempt to be both a pious man and a good citizen.

Beyond Resembling

GARY MARGOLIS

A good many mourners said how much you looked alike—
as if resembling your dead brother would be comforting.
A few went so far as to say they couldn't tell
the difference. You told me the hardest part of mourning

him was seeing all your boyhood friends again
fifty years later and, I think, sitting with your other
brothers wondering whom death would touch next.
I sat between you and mother to be closer to you.

She leaned nearer and seeing you cry said
you'd been bad like this for days. I couldn't see
anything bad or good, except your man's tears
saved up for fifty years filling in the dry river

bed of your face. I wept, too, because today
you were sitting next to me and we could weep
together, because I knew now in my life
there was nothing else I could do beyond resembling you.

GARY MARGOLIS is the director of counseling at Middlebury College. He is the author of *The Day We Still Stand Here*, a book of poems.

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Early Sunday Morning

(title of painting by Edward Hopper, 1930)

JOHN STONE

Somewhere in the next block
someone may be practicing the flute
but not here

where the entrances
to four stores are dark
the awnings rolled in

nothing open for business
Across the second story
ten faceless windows

In the foreground
a barber pole, a fire hydrant
as if there could ever again

be hair to cut
fire to burn
And far off, still low

in the imagined East
the sun that is again
right on time

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adding to the Chinese red
of the building
despite which color

I do not believe
the day
is going to be hot

It was I think
on just such a day
it is on just such a morning

that every Edward Hopper
finishes, puts down his brush
as if to say

As important
as what is
happening

is what is not.

JOHN STONE is a physician in Atlanta and the author of two books of poems, *The Smell of Matches* and *In all this Rain.*

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In Love with Politics

ROBERT NISBET

SELECTED LETTERS OF EDMUND BURKE. *Edited with an introduction by Harvey C. Mansfield, Jr. University of Chicago Press. $27.50.*

This excellent collection of Burke's letters is based upon the monumental ten-volume edition of Burke's complete correspondence published by the University of Chicago Press (1958–78) under the general editorship of the late Thomas W. Copeland and with the contributions of Burke scholars on both sides of the Atlantic. Professor Mansfield has wisely arranged his selected letters by topic or theme—American Revolution, Irish Question, etc.—prefacing each of the book's ten sections with a brief narration of the circumstances pertinent to the letters contained. Mansfield's introduction is an admirable essay on Burke's political philosophy. There is also a compact sketch of Burke's life and career.

Burke's career was essentially one of active and intense politics. Most of the political wisdom that we associate with Burke lies in either Parliamentary addresses or in pamphlets and public letters. It is tempting but futile to speculate on what Burke might have done had he taken the time to write the kind of treatise on government that his close and admiring friend Adam Smith wrote on economics. Without doubt the substance of such a work is present in writings as we have them; and no more gifted stylist existed in even his lustrous age. He was greatly respected by Dr. Johnson, Sir Joshua Reynolds, David Garrick, Adam Smith, David Hume, and minds of comparable luster in other countries. His two books, both written in England shortly after his arrival from Ireland, *A Vindication of Natural Society* and *The Sublime and the Beautiful,* attracted a considerable measure of attention at the time of publication. The first contains at least the germs of the ideas that would be associated closely with his political philosophy. In his rich satire on Bolingbroke's natural-law philosophy of religion, Burke managed to get across his respect for tradition, history, convention, and other forces to which natural law theorists had given little if any attention and no respect at all. Add the implicit philosophical and historical knowledge that is so visible in his later speeches, pamphlets, and public letters, from his *Thoughts on the Cause of the Present Discontents* down to his *Letter to a Noble Lord,* and the evidence is strong that Burke could have written his own version of a *Wealth of Nations* or a *Treatise of Human Nature.*

What he lacked were will and desire and, perhaps, patience. By the time of Rockingham's first ministry, Burke was almost head over heels in love with politics as it existed in the House of Commons and was buoyed up by the party system. There was no time for a treatise after he had spent his day in the Commons and perhaps begun such a speech as *On Conciliation with the Colonies* or started the writing of his *Letter to the Sheriffs of Bristol.* The writing of these was for Burke what the writing of essays was to Addison and of histories was to Gibbon. And in retrospect, what difference at bottom does the lack of a treatise in Burke's works make so far as influ-

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ence upon posterity is concerned? *Reflections on the Revolution in France* is in form a long public letter and in content often pure tract. But not many books have had greater and more easily demonstrated effect upon the light and the leading of later generations in all spheres. It was the stimulus to the almost immediate growth of philosophical and political conservatism that stretches from Burke to the present day. Chateaubriand and Bonald in France, Coleridge and Matthew Arnold in England, Savigny and Hegel in Germany are only a few of the many who were directly influenced in their political convictions by Burke. The special character of Tocqueville's liberalism is to be understood only in the light of ripples of conservatism that reached him from Burke. Statesmen of the order of Disraeli, Bryce, and Woodrow Wilson all attested to the formative effects of their reading of Burke. The historical schools in law, politics, and economics in western Europe through the nineteenth century clearly stem from the testimony to tradition and history that Burke set forth in the *Reflections*. In his celebration of institutions instead of the Enlightenment's natural-law, abstracted, individuals, Burke necessarily gave institutions epistemological prominence—for liberals and rationalists, for philosophers, social scientists, and politicians alike.

As we might expect, there is frequent echo in the letters of the themes of his speeches and political writings. Occasionally there is the letter that actually signals in effect the content of a forthcoming public statement of views. But for those looking in Burke's letters for what they hope are the secret psychological springs of his notable positions on the issues of his day, there is likely to be disappointment. At least as far as letters are concerned, the private Burke is usually the public Burke. On this Mansfield writes:

> We tend to think that, in securing a view of the private Burke, we are getting a glimpse of the real Burke. . . . But Burke was a remarkable man, and while we have our eyes on him backstage, we see him with his eye on the play of public issues even when his own concerns clamored to distract him. He was always busy, and his letters are not the profusions of a gossip, remarks of a wry observer, or effusions of a tormented soul, but the letters of a busy man.

Burke was busy with great events and changes. Mansfield compares Burke to Churchill and Tocqueville in his power to see the long consequences of events occurring around him. He correctly predicted in his speeches and writings—on the American colonists, on Hastings and the East India Company and their ravages of Hindu culture, on the economic and religious miseries of the Irish under British rule, and on the French Revolution and its relation to the world—what the consequences would be, not only to those countries, but to England itself. On the last, there is an interesting observation concerning the English in a letter to Burke's patron and friend Lord Rockingham, in August 1775. It deals with the reaction upon the English people of the measures taken by the British government against the Americans. "I am satisfied that within a few years there has been a great change in the national character. We seem no longer that eager, inquisitive, jealous, fiery people which we have been formerly. . . . The people look back without pleasure of indignation, and forward without hope or fear."

Burke was, and has often since been, criticized for the ferocity of his attack in the Commons on Warren Hastings as the chief malefactor in what Burke saw as the rape of India. But in truth Burke tended to see all major events overwhelmingly in terms of the principal actors. In a letter to M. Depont just prior to his famous "letter" to Depont known to us as the *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, Burke enjoins his friend not to separate "the merits of any political questions from the men who are concerned in it. You will be told that if a measure is good, what have you to do with the character and view of those who bring it forward. But designing men never separate their plans from their interests. . . . The power of bad men is no indifferent thing."

The men Burke had in mind were the Jacobins foremost, but additionally there are the philosophes, among them Rousseau, who had, in Burke's opinion, laid the ground for the Jacobins. In his *Annual Register*, a book-review medium Burke had founded and chiefly furnished with his own prose, there are hostile reviews of Rousseau, whom Burke judged to be a genius well above his contemporaries, but a malign genius at work on the

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destruction of civil society. Later, in the *Reflections* and in the *Letter to a Member of the National Assembly,* Burke enlarged his indictment of Rousseau and, indeed, turned his fire upon the whole class of intellectuals of which Rousseau was a member. In words that Tocqueville would echo in his own treatment of the French Revolution and of the Enlightenment that preceded it, Burke declared them socially rootless, politically irresponsible, intoxicatedly utopian, and authors of a new political religion that united zeal and power. They were "metaphysicians" of power and depredation.

But quite apart from the unsavory characters of the philosophes and Jacobin leaders, as Burke perceived them, the schemes themselves were deeply flawed. Such schemes sought to remake man as well as the social order. In all political changes, Burke declares to Depont, "moderation is a virtue not only amiable but powerful." If moderation is lacking, as it seemed so clearly to Burke to be the case with the Jacobins, "their acts will taste more of their power than of their wisdom or their benevolence. Whatever they do will be in extremes; it will be crude, harsh, precipitate."

To the end of his days Burke held tenaciously to this view of the French Revolutionists, and it was precisely this view that became the cause of first the break with Fox in the Whig party and then the cause of the deep division in the party between Old and New Whigs, a division that would never be repaired. It was not that such men as Fox and Tom Paine believed in "crude, harsh, precipitate" measures of government. Far from it. It was rather their genuine belief that Burke had become fanciful and could no longer see the spirit of independence that he had once hailed in the American colonists but now refused even to see in the French leaders. Very early, in short, the question was formed that continues to divide intellectuals and scholars even in our day: Was Burke inconsistent in his attitudes toward the American and French revolutions? And was this asserted inconsistency connected in any way with Burke's paid position as agent to the New York colony, which he held in the years leading up to the American rebellion, years during which Burke gave some of his most resounding speeches in Parliament on behalf of the Americans?

There is no valid reason to answer yes to the last question. Burke's attacks on the British government for its policies toward the peoples of India and Ireland were cut from the same cloth as his attacks on Lord North and his ministers for repressive measures against the Americans, and he was never agent for the peoples of India and Ireland. As his *Letter to the Sheriffs of Bristol* notably demonstrates, Burke knew exactly what an agent was as distinguished from an elected political representative. Both as agent and as representative, as well as philosopher, Burke had a profound conviction that any people's ingrained beliefs, customs, and moral values should be tolerated by the mother country to the last possible moment, short of outright rebellion. In a letter to William Burgh in 1775, Burke writes of dissenters as well as colonials on this: "There are many things among most of them which I rather *dislike* than dare to *condemn.* My ideas of tolerance go beyond even theirs. I would give a full civil protection, in which I include an immunity, for all disturbance of their public religious worship, and a power of teaching in schools as well as temples to Jews, Mahometans and even Pagans; especially if they are already possessed of any of those advantages by long and prescriptive usage; which is as sacred in this exercise of Rights as in any other." Burke pretty much lived as he wrote. He gave a group of visiting Hindus use of his own home for their religious services after they had been denied use of any church, dissenting or established, in London.

Both as agent and as representative in Parliament, Burke insisted, though, upon final political loyalty to the mother country. He wrote as *agent* as well as parliamentary representative of Bristol to the Committee of Correspondence of New York Colony's assembly in April 1774: "Every good Englishman, as such, must be a friend to the Colonies; and all the true friends to the Colonies, the only *true* friends they have had, or ever can have in England, have laid and will lay down the proper subordination of America as a fundamental and incontrovertible maxim in the government of this empire. . . . Very unfortunately, in my poor thoughts, the advice of that sort of temperate man has been little attended

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to on this side of the Atlantic and rather less on the other." As agent, Burke knew his total responsibility was to the principal he served —in this instance the Americans—but he felt obligated all the same to let them know that their growing fever of animosity toward England was hurting both their cause and their stock in the affections of supporters in England.

Burke broke his agentship and went publicly silent on the American cause once war broke out. But in several of the letters in this volume, we see the persistence of his general regard for the Americans and even a certain pleasure in their good performances at Lexington and Concord and Bunker Hill. As late as August 1775, Burke began a letter: "The spirit of America is incredible. . . . Washington himself is a man of good military experience, prudent and cautious, and yet who stakes a fortune of about 5,000 a year. . . . Our victories can only complete our ruin."

Even though Burke granted the ultimate right of the British government to take up arms after overt rebellion had broken out in Massachusetts, he yet hoped—in a letter to Rockingham—that his country's war against the Americans would be a limited war. "The great evil and danger will be the full and decided engagement of Parliament in this war. Then we shall be thoroughly dipped; and there will be no way of getting out but by disgracing England or enslaving America." Once widened to include the vociferous support of Parliament, "the popular cry will be with them. The style will be that their hands must be strengthened by unreserved confidence. When that cry is raised, and raised it infallibly will be if not prevented, the puny voice of reason will not be heard."

Burke may have been wrong in his view of the French Revolution, as Price and Paine and then in due course many of his fellow Whigs, including Fox, charged, but given his almost immediate image of the Jacobin leaders in France, the rest of his indictment follows logically. That image was one of boundless power seeking over the rights of free Frenchmen. In Burke's view, set forth in the *Reflections*, the Jacobin leaders, "acting as conquerors, have imitated the harshest of that harsh race. The policy of such barbarous victors, who contemn a subdued people, and insult their feelings . . . has ever been to destroy all vestiges of the ancient country, in religion, in polity, in laws, and in manners."

Burke saw the French Revolution—was the first to see it—quite as the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917 would be seen by his intellectual heirs, beginning with Churchill after the Great War. It was, Burke declared in his *Reflections*, no mere seizure of the political government, but a nihilistic crusade against the civil order of all Europe and then the rest of the world, a crusade that must be stopped, therefore, by the European powers organizing in what Burke, as well as the Jacobins, called "counterrevolution." Whether the French Revolution did or did not play the role in both subversion and erosion of European civilization seems to depend upon one's philosophy of the history of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In any event, the role that revolution played in the thought of the next century is comparable to the role played in our century by the Bolshevik Revolution.

Burke did not bend an iota in his position on France, no matter what the volume of charges was from so many of his once-cherished Whig friends and allies. The break with Fox was the high point, of course; one that cost each man much in sentiment. But to his death Burke was unyielding. The final letter included in this volume is one by, not Burke, but Mrs. Burke. It is a reply by her to Fox's effort, just before Burke's death, to bring about a reconciliation with his now-estranged old ally. I cite it in full.

> Mrs Burke presents her compliments to Mr Fox, and thanks him for his obliging inquiries. Mrs Burke communicated his letter to Mr Burke, and, by his desire, has to inform Mr Fox that it has cost Mr Burke the most heart-felt pain to obey the stern voice of his duty in rending asunder a long friendship, but that he deemed this sacrifice necessary; that his principles remained the same; and that in whatever of life yet remained to him, he conceives that he must live for others and not for himself. Mr Burke is convinced that the principles which he has endeavoured to maintain are necessary to the welfare and dignity of his country, and that these principles can be enforced only by the general persuasion of his sincerity. For herself, Mrs Burke has again to express her gratitude to Mr Fox for his inquiries.

The highest compliment Burke gave to either individuals or to their works in liberty, the arts, justice, or bravery was *manly*. He must surely have thought this letter manly.

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Going, Going, Gone

WHEN WORDS LOSE THEIR MEANING: CONSTITUTIONS AND RECONSTITUTIONS OF LANGUAGE, CHARACTER, AND COMMUNITY. *By James Boyd White. University of Chicago Press. $25.*

Reviewed by ROGER KIMBALL

In this ambitious and demanding work of literary criticism, James Boyd White seeks to communicate "a sense of reading in a new and different way." Describing the book as "performative, creative, even imagistic in character," he rightly observes that it is "harder to summarize, and slower to read, than many books are"; and he adds, "it asks not to be read through once only but to be thought about and lived with." It may be best, then, to begin with some particulars.

When Words Lose Their Meaning consists of ten chapters. The opening chapter, "A Way of Reading," acquaints us with Mr. White's literary-critical affiliations and his views on the connections between language, character, and culture. His chief debts, he tells us, are to the New Criticism, with its insistence on close reading and the relative self-sufficiency of the text, and to "reader response" criticism, which makes the reader's experience of the text the touchstone of interpretation.

The succeeding eight chapters attempt to illustrate and exemplify the conception of reading adumbrated in the first chapter by applying it to particular texts. White devotes a chapter apiece to the *Iliad*, Thucydides' *History*, Plato's *Gorgias*, Jonathan Swift's *A Tale of a Tub*, Dr. Johnson's *Rambler* essays, Jane Austen's *Emma*, and Edmund Burke's *Reflections*. His penultimate chapter, "The Possibilities of American Law," concentrates on the Declaration of Independence, some portions of the Constitution of the United States, and Chief Justice Marshall's landmark opinion in *McCulloch vs. Maryland* (1819), which greatly expanded federal power by reaffirming the right of judicial review. An edifying afterword summarizes White's position, underscoring the social and ethical dimensions of his argument.

Faced with this potpourri, a skeptical reader might well demur. What logic can have governed the selection of texts? Does the author's competence really embrace so much of Greek culture, eighteenth-century English letters, and the niceties of American legal hermeneutics? I cannot claim that White's performance answers every scruple; but as professor of law, professor of English, and adjunct professor of classical studies at the University of Michigan, he would appear to be unusually well equipped for the task he has set himself. In fact, his marriage of lawyerly acumen and classically trained literary sensibility—equally evident in his earlier work, *The Legal Imagination*—gives the best parts of *When Words Lose Their Meaning* a gravity and moral earnestness rare in the pages of contemporary literary criticism.

Because White's larger purpose is to expound a "new way of reading," he intends his book to operate on two levels. On the one hand, as a more or less straightforward exercise in literary criticism, it offers interpretations—often quite detailed—of particular texts. And despite his somewhat laborious prose, White here proves himself an able critic. His readings, though at times perhaps more ingenious than convincing, are invariably sensitive and well informed; I found the chapters on Johnson and Burke especially illuminating. But his aspirations far exceed the mere explication of texts. For at bottom, we discover, the book is "concerned with a set of substantive questions that are suggested and exemplified in these texts: about the nature of language, self, and community; about the character of literary and political action; about the ways in which culture is defined and transformed."

These broader concerns are neatly reflected in the book's title, which, as White notes, alludes to a well-known passage from the third book of the *History of the Peloponnesian War*. Lamenting the frightful anomie that engulfed the Hellenic world in the aftermath of the revolution in Corcyra, Thucydides remarks that

> to fit in with the change of events, words, too, had to change their usual meanings. What used to be described as a thoughtless act of aggression was now regarded as the courage one would expect to find in a party member; to think of the future and wait was merely another way of saying one was a

ROGER KIMBALL has written for the *New Criterion*, the *Bennington Review*, and other journals.

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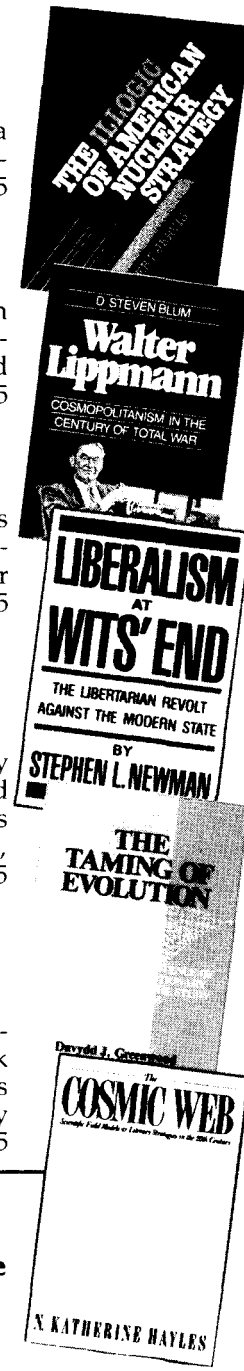

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coward; any idea of moderation was just an attempt to disguise one's unmanly character; ability to understand a question from all sides meant that one was totally unfitted for action. Fanatical enthusiasm was the mark of a real man, and to plot against an enemy behind his back was perfectly legitimate self-defense. . . . As the result of these revolutions, there was a general deterioration of character throughout the Greek world. The simple way of looking at things, which is so much the mark of a noble nature, was regarded as a ridiculous quality and soon ceased to exist.

Like Thucydides, White is interested in the linguistic strategies we use to meet a recalcitrant or threatening world. He aims to make us more aware of the ways in which stresses in language token stresses in reality, including our own reality. "When language changes meaning," he writes, "the world changes meaning, and we are part of the world."

Thus paramount among the "substantive questions" that *When Words Lose Their Meaning* addresses is the problem of the relation between language and culture. "In this book," White explains, "I use the word 'language' as a partial synonym for the word 'culture,' . . . [because] language, after all, is the repository of the kinds of meaning and relation that make a culture what it is." It follows from this that any critique of language will at the same time be a critique of culture, but it is worth noting that genuine criticism remains possible only so long as *language* and *culture* are not fully synonymous.

It is also worth remarking the similarity between White's conception of language here and Wittgenstein's notion of the "language game," defined in his *Philosophical Investigations* as "the whole, including language and the actions into which it is woven." But precisely because he contends that *language* and *culture* are only partial synonyms, White would seem to be more careful than Wittgenstein about preserving the critical dimension of language. One might reasonably ask for greater specificity on this issue than White provides, but it is clear that for him culture is not exhausted by language. Language itself provides the means to step outside the particular language game we find ourselves playing. "We are in part the products of our language," he observes, "but each time we speak we remake it." Thus, though he emphasizes the deep connection between language and culture, he can also insist that his book "is not only about language but what lies beyond it."

Indeed, in the end White is most interested in exhibiting the semantic resources that allow us to use language to distance ourselves from culture: to reflect on—and, finally, to criticize—language and the inherited values it articulates. His task is thus as much ethical as it is aesthetic, though it would perhaps be more accurate to say that for him aesthetic appreciation inextricably involves ethical assessment. "One way to sum up my view," he writes,

is to say that I regard all speaking and writing, and reading too, as a cultural and ethical activity that is itself a kind of literary and social art, a way of doing one thing with something else. This art is the activity by which the individual makes out of common materials a new version of what he has inherited, a reconstitution of his language and culture.

Hence, the "way of reading" he envisions does not aim simply at improving the reader's comprehension; it proposes to awaken him to himself and his need for such "reconstitution." "Reading is an engagement that changes the mind," he writes, "and this book is about that change."

White again and again adverts to this dimension—which we might call the "existential" dimension—inherent in his conception of reading. One typical instance is this passage from his discussion of Burke:

The ideal reader of the *Reflections* would thus not say at the end merely that he now "believed in" certain propositions for "certain reasons." He would see the world differently, would think, speak, and act differently. He would have mastered a language of fact, motive, and sentiment that would affect his conduct and his feeling forever. This text seeks to persuade its reader not to a set of propositions but to a language—a language of belief and of action. It means to offer him an education that will equip him differently for life.

Burke's text is thus said to offer "not a theory but a way of life." And, as with all genuine reading, the task is not simply to register facts but to appropriate the truth that the text expresses in its dialogue with the reader, to make it "in a deep sense one's own."

Of course, novelty is not the issue here, but it should be noted that in this respect White's

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"new" conception of reading is not really new but is the beneficiary of a long and distinguished heritage. One thinks, for example, of Kierkegaard's startling pronouncement that "subjectivity is truth" and his subsequent "definition" of truth as "an objective uncertainty" that is "held fast in an appropriation process of the most passionate inwardness." But oddly enough, while White champions such "inwardness" as the sine qua non of authentic, engaged reading, his own book does little to foster it. Ostensibly, it advocates the living spirit over the dead letter; but in its tone and style it is too often wearily academic: not just scholarly—though it is plenty *wissenschaftlich*—but ponderous, overly schematic, given to belaboring the obvious. This is especially lamentable in view of the refreshingly humanistic point of view that the book espouses.

White is at his best when he is engaged in the analysis of particular texts. In his more speculative moments, the temptations of theory tend to overwhelm his better judgment—leading him at times, for example, to speak as if the authors he cites somehow had been in deliberate collusion with his idea of reading when they wrote their books.

In fact, in its theoretical ambitions, *When Words Lose Their Meaning* is something of a jumble. This shows itself most obviously in the stunning number of things it is supposed to be about. In addition to the topics I have already mentioned, its "true subject" is said to be "the double activity of claiming meaning for experience and of establishing relations with others in language," but also it is "really about law from beginning to end," as well as about " 'reading' defined so generously as to include writing and speaking, indeed all the ways we have of living with language and with others through language" and even about " 'writing' in the most general sense of the term: about what happens whenever a person uses language to claim a meaning for experience, to act on the world, or to establish relations with another person." It would seem, in short, to be about almost everything.

No doubt White hopes to highlight the "existential" aspect of his book by embracing so much. But his attempts to "expand our conception of what we mean by reading and writing to include every effort to claim meaning or establish relations in language" result in confusion, not a deeper appreciation or "reconstitution" of meaning. For what wouldn't count as "reading and writing" in this sense? When I ask at the pharmacy for aspirin or construe a traffic signal or hail a cab or introduce myself to an attractive stranger, am I engaged in reading (or writing)? These acts "claim meaning," but I take it they qualify as reading (or writing) only in a Pickwickian sense. In this book, White has sought to exemplify a new conception of reading; but, by abandoning the standard sense of the term, he threatens to lend his title a dimension of irony that he can have hardly intended.

Her Own Story

VANESSA BELL. *By Frances Spalding. Ticknor & Fields. $22.95.*

Reviewed by MARNIE JONES

People read biography for the same reason they read fiction: not to find out, simply, what happens next, but to figure out how people live their lives, how they solve their problems. Today we may not want moral models as Samuel Johnson so clearly did, but we do look for models just the same. Biography provides examples—both successes and failures—of people working out their lives. Perhaps biographies of artists—be they novelists, poets, or painters—continue to fascinate readers because these people, consciously or not, create their own lives as well as their art. Leon Edel thinks that what interests readers in literary biography is the "mysterious and magical process of creation" that goes into making great literature. But I am not so sure. I would guess that there are people who have made it through Edel's five-volume biography of Henry James who can't quite manage to finish *The Golden Bowl*, so something in addition to James's fiction must interest readers. Many readers, it seems to me, may well be interested in the "mysterious and magical . . . creation" of lives, not art. That, at any rate, is what Johnson thought when he set about writing *The Lives of the English Poets*.

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Readers who are primarily interested in lives rather than art are likely to be quite satisfied by Frances Spalding's biography of Vanessa Bell. For in this story readers are bound to think that there is something as, if not more, magical and mysterious in the process of leading a life than in the creation of fiction or of art.

Consider a description of Vanessa Bell given in the biography—a picture of what she looked like in 1937. As a young man, Nigel Henderson was a bit cowed by Vanessa. More than forty years after meeting her, he wrote to Frances Spalding that, although he could not remember the details clearly, Vanessa had made a vivid impression on him. Henderson remembered: "She wore a . . . very old and rather fatigued hat. Was she not in a polo-necked jersey, rather long, a long skirt . . . and old gym shoes? I don't remember the specifics but none of this would have raised an eyebrow on any '60s campus but was a Declaration of Independence which I found formidable, backed up by an engaging shyness and apparent unconsciousness of the bizarre figure she cut in those semi-formal times." This recollection of Vanessa Bell incites curiosity, as do any of the facts about her life that a reader might know. How did the beautiful daughter of Leslie Stephen, raised in that most Victorian of households, become the Vanessa Bell of 1937—a fifty-seven-year-old woman in gym shoes, who was shy, independent, formidable? Surely there is a story there. That is what interests us about Vanessa Bell, quite as much as that her sister was Virginia Woolf or that her husband and lovers were central figures in the group that has come to be called Bloomsbury.

Before this biography of Vanessa Bell, her claim on our attention rested on her relationship to Virginia Woolf and her place at the center of the Bloomsbury circle rather than on her status as a painter. But, as Frances Spalding makes plain in this splendid biography, Vanessa Bell deserves our attention for her own sake. Spalding, an English lecturer and writer about art, came to write this biography after having written the biography of Roger Fry, who was, among other more important things, Vanessa's lover and close friend. In preparation for that earlier biography, Frances Spalding read the still-unpublished, voluminous, and rather painful correspondence between Vanessa Bell and Roger Fry. So it was not only, and perhaps not even principally, an interest in Vanessa's art that prompted this biography; it was no doubt her life itself and its intimate connection to Roger Fry. For this reason readers who know little of Post-Impressionism, readers who care little for Virginia Woolf, and even, I think, readers who feel they have heard more than they wish about Bloomsbury, will find this biography of interest.

In the past ten years or so, publishers have inundated us with books about Bloomsbury, both important books written by the principals and tiresome ones by the hangers-on. I have read more of the latter group than I care to remember, but *Vanessa Bell* is not of this sort. It does not vicariously revel in the sexual carryings-on of people long dead. Nor is it, ultimately, the story of Bloomsbury; rather, it is the story of a woman's attempt to create art and, more important, to love her family and friends—however unconventional the family and however famous the friends. It is a story of pain and loss: a story of a strained, yet somehow strong, relationship between Vanessa and her eldest son Julian, who was killed in the Spanish civil war; of her conflict with and estrangement from her daughter Angelica; and of the compromises with and lasting love for both her husband Clive Bell and her lover Duncan Grant. It is the stuff novels are made of.

Most, if not all, of the Bloomsbury books depict Vanessa Bell as the symbol of the group, or at least as its center. It was, after all, at her house in Gordon Square where the Bloomsbury Thursday evening get-togethers began. Vanessa Bell seems to have drawn people to her, much in the same way that Virginia Woolf's fictional Mrs. Ramsay does. If Vanessa Bell symbolizes Bloomsbury, it is worth noting that this biography reminds us that the group was tied together not by its ideas—George Moore and *Principia Ethica* notwithstanding—but by its people. And even these ties were somewhat amorphous. Since Vanessa was a very private person, the importance of the group recedes into the background of Frances Spalding's story. Virginia Woolf, John Maynard Keynes, Roger Fry, Lytton Strachey, and Duncan Grant were all interesting, dominating people, and it is a credit to Frances Spalding that her biography

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reflects reality to the extent that none of them manages to overshadow Vanessa.

Living at a time when women had fewer choices than they now do, and when women rarely exerted control over their own lives, Vanessa made choices and took control, but neither brought her happiness. The years in Bloomsbury—from 1905 to 1916—are well known. After the stultifying years of taking care of her father (and knowing full well that the first Mrs. Leslie Stephen, her own mother, and her half sister all had given a good part of their lives in that service), Vanessa began leading what her aunts believed was a wild life, setting up house with her brother Thoby in an "unrespectable" section of London, Bloomsbury.

But life got considerably wilder—even by our standards. After her brother's death, Vanessa married his good friend Clive Bell. Between them they lived what in our day would be called an open marriage; after several years and two sons, they each took other lovers. Nevertheless they remained married, and, what is more surprising, they remained close. After a rather short-lived affair with Fry, Vanessa turned to what would be the major, and in some sense the tragic, relationship of her life—she fell in love with the painter Duncan Grant, who was a homosexual. Despite his preference for men, despite his seemingly endless succession of lovers (one of whom would later marry *their* daughter), Duncan and Vanessa continued together until her death in 1961. Vanessa never seems to have been confident that their relationship would last. Well into old age she feared—and with good reason, one can't help but feel—that she would lose him.

The bare outlines of the story seem quintessentially Bloomsburian. What, after all, are the qualities that come to mind when any member of Bloomsbury is mentioned? A certain sexual licentiousness—that is always the first charge, which is usually followed rather quickly by objections about their privileged class status and their incessant need to react against conventions. Another charge, one that their own offspring leveled at them, is their irresponsible retreat from the concerns of the world. But, as you read Vanessa Bell's story, these complaints and excuses seem to fade away. This is the story of one woman's life, of the curious and only partially successful at-

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tempt to take control and create her own life. Vanessa Bell's story reminds us, finally, that there are things outside of our control.

In Quentin Bell's biography of Virginia Woolf and Frances Spalding's earlier biography of Roger Fry, Vanessa emerges as one of the most important people in each subject's life. Although Vanessa cared deeply for both her sister and Fry, in *her* story Duncan Grant and her son Julian are the major figures and the major sources of pain. For, with all the seeming freedom in the world, Vanessa chose to love a man who couldn't fully return her love; that decision—if, indeed, we decide such things—caused her to retreat into herself. In a review of this biography in the *New York Times Book Review*, Samuel Hynes pointed out that "if you really want to know, you can find just . . . who Duncan Grant was in love with when. But I'd be happy to leave the sex lives of the dead to the necrophiles." Yet it seems to me that Spalding handles the subject with perfect tact. Yes, we learn who Duncan Grant loved when, but we are spared the grisly details. In this biography, the events are told, but as they ought to be—in relation to their effect on Vanessa. The effect was monumental: day by day Vanessa tolerated, even welcomed, these men because she saw them as a link to Duncan; but over the course of her life, this uncertainty gradually wore away at her. It would be hard to see how her biographer could avoid the topic of Duncan Grant's lovers.

Spalding does not psychoanalyze her subject, and this is a real strength of the biography. (Although at one point Spalding suggests that both Vanessa's creativity as a painter and Virginia's talent as a novelist derive from a lack of attention by their mother, this, happily, is pretty much the extent of such speculations.) Spalding argues that Vanessa's "inability to love Roger [Fry] lost her much. . . ." Spalding believes, as did Fry himself, that he would have been able to respond fully to her love—and had he been allowed to do so, her life would have been different.

But she didn't love him, and life was not different. Vanessa couldn't perfectly control her relations with those she cared about most (although Roger Fry, who saw her as a sort of goddess, thought she could), so she created a world that she *could* control. She created a home, Charleston, an artistic and emotional haven. The house itself, if not the life lived there, was casual and harmonious. The house was filled with artwork and designs, with hardly a surface uncovered. Charleston was a creative retreat, but a retreat nonetheless.

The uncertain years with Duncan and then the blow of Julian's death in Spain forced Vanessa to retreat more and more into herself and into Charleston. After Julian's death Vanessa wrote: "In spite of all the terrible things that happen[,] how much one still has to lose." The sentence acknowledges that life offers much, but the emphasis is clearly on the fear of further loss. At the time she wrote this, she had already lost both Roger and Julian and was still to lose Virginia. Add to these losses the possibility of losing Duncan, and she seems, crucially, to have lost confidence in herself. Again, after Julian's death, Vanessa wrote to Vita Sackville-West, "I cannot ever say how Virginia has helped me. Perhaps some day, not now, you will be able to tell her it's true." Only after Virginia's death did Vanessa learn that the message had in fact been conveyed. Her family often said that Vanessa never recovered from the loss of Julian, but her inability to reach to her sister in her own deepest need suggests that the retreat from others had already cost her dearly.

Vanessa's withdrawal influenced her art as well as her dealings with people. Spalding sees the group portraits Vanessa created after the war as "strangely awkward and devoid of feeling" precisely because of this retreat into herself. Vanessa's withdrawal provides a particular challenge for her biographer. Like most artists, Vanessa Bell led a "strong interior life." As a painter her life was lived largely in her mind, and by nature Vanessa always held a part of herself back. Her biographer has not only to account for the aloofness, but to break through it to express the interior life that she wouldn't let others share—not Roger, not Virginia, not Duncan.

Frances Spalding does a remarkably good job of this. She identifies Vanessa's "implied aesthetic . . . [to be that] the artist is she or he who can shape, contain or reproduce feeling and sensitivity in such a way that others can share it." This for Vanessa, who was indebted to Post-Impressionism and Roger Fry, required a certain disinterest on the part of the artist in her. Frances Spalding does shape

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Vanessa Bell's life so that readers can share her experiences and her feelings, however unlike our own they may be, but she does so without the cool disinterest that Vanessa herself valued. It is clear that Spalding sympathizes with and admires her subject, and it is well that she does, for surely an aesthetics of disinterest would be a liability to a biographer, just as it eventually seems to have been for Vanessa Bell the painter.

Hard Times

DOSTOEVSKY: THE YEARS OF ORDEAL, 1850–1859. *By Joseph Frank. Princeton University Press. $25.*

Reviewed by R. A. PEACE

This, the second volume of Professor Joseph Frank's projected five-volume definitive biography of Dostoevsky, will undoubtedly attract the wide critical acclaim that greeted its predecessor, *The Seeds of Revolt*, and justly so. It displays the same depth of knowledge and attention to detail that characterized the earlier work and that gave such an auspicious start to this whole ambitious project. Professor Frank's approach is that of "fusing biography, literary criticism and social-cultural history" into a study that will not only reveal the facts of Dostoevsky's life, but also examine his writings in the context of the philosophical and cultural currents of his day. Nevertheless, Frank admits that in this second volume he has had to make allowances for the highly exceptional circumstances in Dostoevsky's life during this period, when survival, of necessity, took precedence over art. What a nightmare of trauma this was! Arrest, interrogation, and solitary confinement, a mock execution, penal settlement followed by the prospect of indefinite Siberian exile as a common soldier, the onset and diagnosis of epilepsy, and a disastrous marriage to a temperamental and highly strung widow of a drunkard—here are all the harsh, raw experiences that will feed the art of his later novels. These, then, are years of crucial importance, but the problems they pose for the biographer are immense. It is not so much lack of material, Professor Frank admits, as the difficulty of getting into the thought processes of a man who was both physically and spiritually immured.

Up to this point, standard interpretations have generally assumed that Dostoevsky underwent a form of religious conversion while in penal settlement, but this view is disputed by Professor Frank. He argues that Dostoevsky had never ceased to be, in some sense, a Christian and that what is really at issue behind Dostoevsky's reference to "the regeneration of my convictions" is not his old faith in Christ but a new belief in the Russian people. Frank's thesis is that Dostoevsky went to the penal settlement with the romantic, Rousseauistic views on the innate goodness of the Russian peasant that were fashionable in the Petrashevsky circle, but that these views were profoundly shaken by the reality of what he encountered there. The shock was as much political as moral. The ineradicable hostility of the peasant convicts toward "fellow" prisoners from the gentry crushed all hope that the intelligentsia could ever be the political leaders of the peasant masses, as they had fondly imagined; this is the negative phase of Dostoevsky's conversion.

Of course a dispassionate, objective view would surely have maintained that these convicts were not peasants living their traditional way of life in an homogeneous community, but that they were some of the worst criminals drawn from the whole of Russia, most of whom happened to be peasants in origin. The Polish political prisoners saw them more in this light, and Frank suggests that such, initially, was the view of Dostoevsky himself. Yet the Poles acted as a catalyst in his own spiritual searchings. Arguing with them, Dostoevsky was forced to defend Russia and Russian nationality, and in that process he came to identify the common criminals around him as the Russian common people with values superior to those of men from his own background—city-dwelling, westernized intellectuals. This positive phase of Dostoevsky's spiritual searchings is the acceptance of what, on the face of it, seems illogical and has features in common with religious conversion. To support his thesis Frank refers to authoritative scientific

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opinion on the psychology of conversion and argues that the psychological pressures on Dostoevsky were precisely those that could bring about such a radical shift, and he does not deny that Dostoevsky's "regeneration of conviction" has religious elements: it is the origin of Dostoevsky's conviction that the Russian simple people are "Godbearing." Frank's thesis suggests a conversion that owes more to religion than he appears to allow, for his argument implies that Dostoevsky abandoned a utopian political view of the peasant (the negative phase) for one that was in essence religious—a faith that the most debased members of the Russian people nevertheless bore the image of Christ.

Frank's thesis is not based on indisputable fact. His case largely rests on two later works of fictional reminiscence, and he admits that how to read the first of these, *Notes from the House of the Dead*, "poses something of a problem. For, clearly, it is as much poetry as truth." The second work is the short polemical story written more than twenty years after his ordeal in the penal settlement—*The Peasant Marey*. Frank recalls how the words of one of the Polish prisoners disparagingly referring to the peasant convicts as "bandits" (the truth after all) angered Dostoevsky and caused him to evoke a memory, the image of another Russian peasant—the Marey who once comforted him as a child. Russian national honor may have been saved by this daydreaming reminiscence, but the image of the peasant Marey poses more problems than it solves. Perhaps we should not expect to find anyone remotely resembling this figure in *Notes from the House of the Dead* itself, but it is surely paradoxical that the one positively good character in that work is neither Russian nor Christian—it is the Tartar boy Aley.

Where, indeed, are the peasant Mareys in Dostoevsky's work as a whole? Frank's thesis seems to suggest the author as another "repentant nobleman" (though he does not use the phrase), but Dostoevsky is certainly no Tolstoy equating divine wisdom with peasant apothegms. It is not a peasant Dostoevsky chooses when he wishes to portray "the positively good man," but a prince (Myshkin in *The Idiot*) or a nobleman ex-soldier (Zosima in *The Brothers Karamazov*). The nearest we come to such a figure from the common people is the shadowy Makar of the unsatisfactory novel *A Raw Youth*. Significantly, perhaps, Makar wears chains, and when peasants make their infrequent appearances on the pages of Dostoevsky's novels, there is often a hint of "captivity," be it the convict Fedka in *The Devils* or the fleeting image of the peasant lad who so impresses Zosima in *The Brothers Karamazov* and who, ominously for one who preaches the beauty and goodness of nature, is a catcher of birds.

If we pursue the implications of Frank's thesis for Dostoevsky's later writing, it would seem that his illogical leap of faith brought him an even more idealized view of the peasant than his original utopian starting point, and that this could find only abstract realization in his art, mostly in the form of ideological assertion. At the same time, the "negative phase" of his conversion also appears to have subsisted, conditioning the appearance (or non-appearance) of peasants in his work.

Professor Frank's interpretation of the psychological significance of captivity for Dostoevsky is radically different from that of Freud, with whom he openly takes issue on this score, much as he did on the question of epilepsy in the first volume. That same attack is renewed here, and Frank quotes the latest medical opinions on the nature of Dostoevsky's epilepsy to support his argument. Some of the most stimulating and enlightening pages are devoted to one of Freud's precursors, C. G. Carus, whose *Psyche* Dostoevsky planned to translate in collaboration with his friend and protector Baron A. Ye. Wrangel. Frank points to ideas in *Psyche* that may have influenced Zosima's teachings on nature in *The Brothers Karamazov* as well as to ideas on the relationship between freedom and suicide that surface on the pages of more than one of Dostoevsky's novels. Here, then, is a period of Dostoevsky's life that Frank's probing analysis and research allows us to see as one rich in experience and ideas. Unfortunately there is not a great deal on which he can exercise his talents as a literary critic. Dostoevsky wrote three minor works in this period: *A Little Hero*, written when he was in prison in St. Petersburg and the two Siberian novellas written after his release from penal settlement, *Uncle's Dream* and *The Village of Stepanchikovo*. These are lighter, more comic works conceived with an eye to censorship that might look askance at the writings of an ex-convict, and Frank's analysis of them is chiefly concerned to show a new theme: "the critique

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of ideology" and his entry into the controversy over "the weak hero." The period ends with Dostoevsky trying to pick up the threads of his former literary career—not only writing, but catching up with the reading of which he was starved in captivity. Two of his literary pronouncements seem ironically self-revealing: "It's Turgenev who pleases me most—only it's too bad that with such an enormous talent, there is such a lack of self-control," he wrote; and of Tolstoy, then just beginning his career, "In my opinion he will write very little (but perhaps I am mistaken)." If the first of these judgments seems to prefigure criticism that would be leveled at Dostoevsky himself, the second mirrors his own falling stock in the eyes of the literary establishment of St. Petersburg, which was now prepared to write him off altogether. In fact, after the penal settlement, a further blow was yet in store. A cruel sketch by Panaev that satirized and dismissed Dostoevsky's earlier literary acclaim appeared in *The Contemporary*. The way back into literature for Dostoevsky did not appear to be easy. Yet with the enormous spiritual resources, the courage and determination that had seen him through his years of ordeal, come back he did, and his second literary reputation would far outshine all that had gone before. But for that we must wait for Professor Frank's next volume.

Talk Show

DESMOND MACCARTHY: THE MAN AND HIS WRITINGS. *Introduced by David Cecil. Constable (London), £9.95.*

Reviewed by JACOB A. STEIN

He seemed to me, and to many other of his friends, in those days to have the world at his feet. He had wit, humor, intelligence, imagination, a remarkable gift of words, an extraordinary power of describing a character, an incident, or a scene. Surely, one thought, here is in the making a writer, a novelist of the highest quality.

That is Leonard Woolf's description of the young Desmond MacCarthy. Similar statements in diaries and memoirs of MacCarthy's

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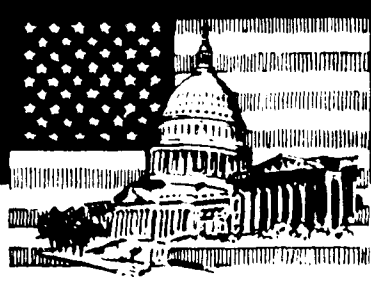

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contemporaries corroborate the description. Without such support, one may have been inclined to discount the statement as an exuberant exaggeration.

What became of this man who commenced with such extraordinary advantages? David Cecil, MacCarthy's son-in-law, gives us one view of the matter in the prefatory memoir that sketches in the main outlines of MacCarthy's life. We learn, among other things, of his rise to prominence as a leading literary critic. MacCarthy was for many years a man of great influence, guiding the public taste through his writings in the Sunday *Times* and before that in the *New Statesman*. He also exerted influence because of his talk. Cecil describes this quality, which most impressed MacCarthy's friends:

> He was a supremely good talker, one of the few supremely good talkers I have ever met, and equal to the best of them. In a charming, expressive voice, male and unmannered but beautifully modulated to convey his ever-changing shades of thought and feeling, his discourse flowed forth, relaxed, leisurely, enthralling. He never let the conversation drop, but it never turned into a monologue either. Desmond was too interested in the person he was talking to to let this happen, wanted too much to know what he or she had to say. His own tone varied in mood, now light, now serious, now thoughtful, now fanciful, now melancholy, now playful. He was humorous rather than witty, with a delicate observant humour that shimmered over any description he might give of a place, a person or an experience. The distinctive, individual characteristic of his conversation was that it combined substance with style. It was very substantial; nature and Cambridge training had taught him to dislike superficial inconsequent talk that, for fear of becoming boring, jumped from one topic to another without giving adequate attention to any.

In an essay entitled "Good Talk," one omitted from the present collection, MacCarthy himself reflected on how fleeting is the fame of a good talker:

> The fame of talkers, alas, is as unsubstantial as the fame of actors. The recorded scraps of old discourse give us little sense of the brilliance of conversation in the past—as little as the specimens which travellers bring home suggest the fertility and wonder of distant lands.

The main body of this book is a selection of Desmond MacCarthy's essays. In them we return to the subject of talk and that narrow but interesting body of literature made up of the writing of writers about the conversation of other writers.

MacCarthy wrote no essay entitled, "On the Conversation of Authors," as Hazlitt did, but such a piece easily can be extracted from his essays. Matters for inclusion would be the description of how Henry James's fear of hurting someone's feelings led him into periphrastic and metaphorical hesitations, "which by delaying perhaps a fatal verdict often made it in the end more crushing." Also to be included would be MacCarthy's recollection of George Meredith: "His talk was full of flourishes and his enunciation grandiose, as though he loved the sound of his own words. This characteristic at first, I remember, somewhat disconcerted me. It struck me that he talked with a kind of swagger, and I was not prepared for that."

One of the essays, simply entitled "Chekhov," shows MacCarthy at the top of his form both as a writer and as a talker. It transmits an impression of what MacCarthy's conversation must have been like. He sees things in Chekhov's plays unobserved by others. He notes that "Chekhov is the artist of farewells; farewells to youth, to hopes, to loves." MacCarthy points out that what each character pines for makes no great difference to the happiness or unhappiness of the person who possesses it. MacCarthy develops his insights with an escalating spontaneity just as he must have done in conversation. Chekhov's favorite themes, according to MacCarthy, are disillusionment and people suffering from an unduly protracted youth. There is a general atmosphere of unfulfilled promise and failure. On the subject of promise and failure, MacCarthy tells us as much about himself as he does about Chekhov.

What Kenneth Clark said of Cyril Connolly —that he came forward with the millstone of promise around his neck—applies to Desmond MacCarthy. Connolly and MacCarthy were good friends. When McCarthy died in 1952, Connolly succeeded him as the literary editor of the Sunday *Times*. David Pryce-Jones, in his recent memoir of Connolly, developed the parallels and divergences in their interesting lives.

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David Cecil marshals the evidence that tends to show that MacCarthy was a failure as a writer. He acknowledges that MacCarthy finished none of the great novels and biographies he started. He quotes from MacCarthy's own letters that admit his failure. Despite this corroborated confession, Cecil then argues that MacCarthy is entitled to a not-guilty verdict because of his importance as a person and as a writer. Whether Mr. Cecil succeeds or not is unimportant.

As a writer, MacCarthy was an interesting essayist, but not one who will command lasting attention. How many essayists do? As a superb talker, he shall last only as long as there is someone alive who caught the talk on the wing. His real survival is tied to Bloomsbury. He is an original member of that group of loving friends who carefully recorded their comings and goings in a flood of recollections, biographies, and autobiographies now into the third generation. Cecil seems interested in separating MacCarthy from the group despite his impeccable credentials as a founder of old Bloomsbury. Certainly, MacCarthy drifted away from its geographical and spiritual boundaries, but it is as we find him caught in the amber of Bloomsbury that posterity shall make its judgment. There we see him almost day by day, especially in Virginia Woolf's diaries. She studied him, she commented on him, she described his family, she put him into a novel, and she lent him money. She did not live to see his final days; her husband, Leonard Woolf, did. Here is Leonard Woolf's recollection of his last meeting with MacCarthy:

The last time I saw him, not long before he died, I walked away with him from the house in Gordon Square where we had a Memoir Club meeting. It was 11 o'clock and a cold autumn night. He was suffering terribly from asthma and was racked by a sudden fit of it as we turned out of the Square. I made him wait while I ran off to find him a taxi. When I put him into the taxi, he looked, not like an affable hawk or even a dishevelled fledgling, but like a battered, shattered, dying rook. At the corner of Gordon Square I suddenly saw him again as a young man walking with me on the hills above Hunter's Inn in Devonshire when we were on an Easter "reading party" with Moore and Lytton. There are few things more terrible than such sud-

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GRAHAM GREENE AND CINEMA
Judith Adamson

From 1932 on, when Graham Greene sold *Stamboul Train* to Twentieth Century Fox, through the next decades in which he wrote film criticism for six separate magazines, Green has maintained a rich, sometimes frustrating, sometimes highly successful relation with film. Most interesting is the way in which the interplay between his fiction and his filmwriting gradually produced novels that were increasingly visual, while the films in which he was engaged took on an increasingly literary slant.

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den visions of one's friends in youth and vigour through the miseries of age and illness. I left Desmond sitting in the taxi, affectionate, dejected, unheroic, because so obviously broken and beaten by asthma and by life; but brave in not complaining and not pretending and in still, when he could, making his jokes and his phrase.

It is regrettable that such a man died leaving no autobiography and that we must rely on others to describe what must have been a memorable personality.

Ragtime

OUTGROWING DEMOCRACY: AMERICA IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY. *By John Lukacs. Doubleday. $19.95.*

Reviewed by JOHN PATRICK DIGGINS

The historical writings of John Lukacs defy classification, at least by American standards. Like his previous books, *Outgrowing Democracy* stands distinctly apart from conventional schools of scholarship. It has little in common with the currently fashionable Marxist perspective, which has led many assistant professors to search American history for evidence of "class consciousness." Lukacs's latest book also keeps its distance from a more old-fashioned liberal perspective, which used to view almost all American history before 1933 as a rendezvous with the New Deal. It is even far removed from the recent neo-conservative perspectives that have arisen to challenge the revisionist interpretation of the cold war and to celebrate once-discredited presidents like Calvin Coolidge. Lukacs, in contrast, wants to drive home to us our foibles and delusions by bringing to American history an Old World sensibility.

Not surprisingly, *Outgrowing Democracy* is sprinkled with quotes from Johan Huizinga, Jacob Burckhardt, Ortega y Gasset, and Alexis de Tocqueville. Lukacs displays a curious disdain for the academic world of scholars, preferring "men and women without doctorates, and unaffiliated with the history departments of colleges and universities." The book is dedicated to George F. Kennan, whose somber views of history the author deeply shares. The dedication is understandable. But whether we can share Lukacs's views on every subject is another matter. For the author seems to have assumed Burckhardt's method of writing history as "a string of marginal notes," and hence we are asked to comprehend events and trends not so much by seeking causal understanding as by appreciating coincidences, anecdotes, ironies, analogies, and parallel if unrelated developments. Making connections and composing transitions—the tasks that challenge the historian and writer—scarcely concern Lukacs. Thus, for all its European learnedness, *Outgrowing Democracy* often reads like E. L. Doctorow's *Ragtime:* a hodgepodge of convictions about big, bad America.

Why does America need to outgrow democracy? Curiously, Lukacs begins with Tocqueville's *Democracy in America*, a long-honored text that, if anything, explained why democracy in the New World held the key to the fate of republican liberty in the Old World. Tocqueville also specifically identified democracy with equality, or the "equality of conditions" that made the American environment hospitable to a new polity that would be able to survive without the classical traditions of civic virtue. Apparently what disturbs Lukacs is America's hubris, its need to make democracy a universal proposition exportable to all parts of the globe. This twentieth-century Wilsonian view, he reminds us, was not held by the Founders. Thus Lukacs cites Washington's advice on avoiding foreign entanglements and John Adams's warning that the United States "does not go abroad in search of monsters to destroy." The "profoundly pessimistic" views of the Founders, however, have been lost sight of in recent times as the United States and Europe have become increasingly alike. We are now in an age when Americans are no longer constrained by their natural environment, but instead have been liberated by technology to assume that all things can be transformed by sheer desire and will. The proud American

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mind expects that it can free itself from material reality as it looks to computers, the automatization of credit, nuclear energy, biological and medical science, and other inventions that have brought about "the insubstantialization of matter," leading to "abstraction, inflation, unreality, at times spilling over into madness."

Having laid out his case for the delusive "spiritualization of matter," Lukacs proceeds to discuss the rise of nineteenth-century cities, mentioning everything from skyscrapers to immigrants; and then he discusses, in frustratingly rapid succession, rural small-town life, Kipling's observations on Pennsylvania's villages, the deteriorated status of blacks, Henry James's cosmopolitanism, the Populist movement, the decline of the merchant marine, Theodore Roosevelt and the Spanish-American War, Owen Wister's *The Virginian* (which made the cowboy the nation's hero), movies, the nickelodeon, the mechanical cash register, automobiles, and Wilsonianism and the League of Nations dream. What all this has to do with the "spiritualization of matter" escapes me. The philosopher George Santayana once observed that Americans see themselves as idealists working upon matter, and he chided us on our assumption, presumably inherited from Calvinism and Emersonianism, that we can realize moral principles by simple practical effort. To explain what ails us, Lukacs cites every development that comes to mind. Perhaps he assumes that, if he describes what Americans have done to themselves, we can know why we have done it and what can be done about it. Yet when presented with such disconnected fragments to explain why we are doomed, one has the feeling of being stoned.

Lukacs is troubled by America, and rightly so. A Hungarian refugee of conservative, Catholic background, he has many things to say that are discerning if not always convincing. He is particularly keen on the advent of the consumer society in the 1950s, when the very sense of possession and permanence had so changed that corporations were allowed tax deductions to increase sales rather than produce goods, and when "making money" replaced the more honored and traditional notion of "earning" it through hard work. He also offers some insights to suggest why Thorstein Veblen's theory of "conspicuous consumption" might be reconsidered. But it is difficult to see how Tocqueville's *Democracy in America* offers an answer to our hedonistic age, as Lukacs suggests throughout the book. What appears to be the problem is the Sunbelt ethos:

> The economic lucubrations of certain California economists rested on the belief that the pursuit of happiness ought to be encouraged, that spending by the wealthier Americans would be sufficient to sustain the economy, "trickling down" sooner or later to the masses. Had Ronald Reagan told the American people that things were indeed difficult, and that the time had come for all Americans to tighten their belts, the nation would have hearkened to such an admonition and followed it: for such were, and such still are, reactions expectable from the yet unexhausted sources of American patriotic idealism. This did not occur to this President, it was not within his character. It was not the first time that the willingness of the American people to sacrifice was underestimated by its leaders.

"The willingness of the American people to sacrifice"? In his letters to the Continental Congress, General Washington doubted that "patriotic idealism" was an "unexhausted" resource—and this in 1776! It is precisely that devotion to the public good that Tocqueville failed to see among Americans, who loved nothing better than to pursue "self-interest" in such systematic fashion that it might be regarded as an "enlightened" example of "virtuous materialism." During the Civil War, Lincoln asked Americans to sacrifice and indeed to swear by the "blood" of the Revolution; but he was courageous enough to admonish Americans, all Americans, by reminding them that they, and not some foreign power, were themselves responsible for "evil" in the world. Most presidents, as Tocqueville, James F. Cooper, and others noted, are the creatures of the very voters who elected them, and people applaud being told good things about themselves. Lukacs seems aware of this, for he explains how the modern presidency has become a public relations institution responsive primarily to opinion polls. He does not seem to recognize why the idea of a virtuous citizenry subordinating its interests to the needs of the state runs against the liberal currents of American history that have their source in Locke's and Jefferson's

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anti-statist values. No wonder Tocqueville could not find in America anything resembling a political state or public philosophy.

John F. Kennedy was perhaps the first liberal president to go against the currents of liberal individualism and ask Americans to consider what they might do for their country. Lukacs believes Kennedy's liberalism was more apparent than real, the welfare paternalism characteristic of the patrician class. Lukacs also notes that Kennedy's Catholicism made him more of a nationalist and anti-communist than even Richard Nixon, whose major passion was to keep proclaiming that America is "Number One." Although approving of Lyndon Johnson's attempt to extend the New Deal to minorities and other excluded Americans, Lukacs reminds us that the Great Society programs were "thoroughly inflationary." The election of President Reagan is offered as evidence of "the postliberal era," but Lukacs suggests that the current militant stance on armaments and "anti-communist rhetoric" represent a return to the 1950s. The Eisenhower era, although prudent in French Indochina and the Middle East, must be judged as a "decade of missed opportunities" for failing to question the course of the cold war and for allowing John Foster Dulles's "brinkmanship" to mislead the world into thinking that America was prepared to come to the aid of Eastern Europe.

Where does Lukacs stand on the cold war? He seems to stand with Europe and realism in preference to America and idealism, holding up Churchill's and de Gaulle's recognition of spheres of influence to the supposedly characteristic Wilsonian effort to extend democracy everywhere. Unlike the revisionists, he does not criticize Truman's Marshall Plan and NATO as unduly aggressive. But Lukacs believes that a nation that had won the war against Nazism was psychologically unprepared to deal with Stalinism. Thus the cold war "was greatly, though not exclusively, the result of reciprocal misunderstanding. Stalin feared that the Americans, now well established in Western Europe, were about to challenge his overlordship of Eastern Europe, something that they had at least tacitly allowed at Yalta. The American government feared that after the establishment of communist governments in Eastern Europe the Russians were about to provoke and sustain communist revolutions in Western Europe. This was a mutual misunderstanding of intentions." It would be interesting to know what steps the West might have taken to ease Soviet insecurities. Stalin, after all, feared Trotsky and Bukharin more than Roosevelt and Truman. Lukacs assumes that the cold war is fundamentally an East-West confrontation, with America having exacerbated the situation by demanding free elections and national self-determination from Russia's new "overlordship." Doubtless Thomas Masaryk and Lech Walesa would have something to say about the need for "outgrowing democracy."

Lukacs writes history with such confidence that his generalizations are seldom disturbed by details. "There was virtually no one who thought that the United States and her allies could not win the war," he writes of American opinion at the outbreak of the Second World War. Clement Greenberg, Dwight Macdonald, Edmund Wilson, and other intellectuals were less sure, and before Pearl Harbor, Charles Lindbergh assured Americans that the Luftwaffe would make scrap metal out of the R.A.F.

Lukacs has a weakness for hyperbole and a curious position on morality. Tocqueville's "Some Characteristics of Historians in Democratic Times" is praised as one of "his shortest, most brilliant, profound, and overlooked chapters" in *Democracy in America*. Tocqueville had argued that in aristocratic ages historians emphasized the role of individuals and ignored the larger forces shaping and connecting events. "But the historian of democratic epochs," he insisted, "seeing the actors less and the events more, can easily string facts together in a methodological order." Yet when Henry Adams tried to string facts together in a nine-volume masterpiece, the meaning of events eluded him. Charles A. Beard, the historian who did more than anyone to make Americans aware of the economic forces shaping history, ended his career by singling out one individual, Franklin Delano Roosevelt, as responsible for Pearl Harbor. Even in democratic cultures historians can neither praise nor blame disembodied events without identifying their alleged agents. As a Catholic, Lukacs seems to side with Tocqueville and Burckhardt in believing that we

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cannot assess individual responsibility in history even though we are obliged to convey the moral lessons of the past. In America's Protestant culture, however, it has always been assumed that human agents must be free if moral judgments are to have any meaning. Perhaps it would be better to suggest that Americans do not need to outgrow democracy as much as they need to relearn morality.

The Exalted Task

THE DECORATED DIAGRAM: HARVARD ARCHITECTURE AND THE FAILURE OF THE BAUHAUS LEGACY. *By Klaus Herdeg. MIT.* $22.50.

Reviewed by CHRISTIAN F. OTTO

A well-known art critic once asked Klaus Herdeg why so many new buildings were ugly; *The Decorated Diagram* is his reply. Had it remained a record of conversation, or even been offered as a lecture, we would rejoice in its commitment and highlights. Transposed into the unremitting permanence of print, the traps of temporized thought snare us on almost every page.

Responding literally to the terms of the query—most new buildings are ugly—Herdeg discusses architectural design, from time to time extending his analysis to those areas where form and space impinge on structure, function, and meaning. He does not address the general problem of the dismally low quality of our built domain, which would plunge his investigation into the vastly complex realms of real estate speculation, housing, bureaucracy, and, eventually, ethics. He attempts to focus the topic by asking: Why do well-known architects, leaders in the profession who are responsible for millions of dollars in new buildings, so frequently design aesthetically inferior architecture? Clearly this is a loaded question.

To establish criteria for leadership in the profession today may not be taxing, but on what basis is "good" architecture determined? In different times and places, as the histories of Gothic, Rococo, and Victorian architecture demonstrate, the very same buildings have been judged both excellent and abysmal. Many fifteenth-century Florentines, for instance, were convinced that everything the Goths had built was opposed to good architecture, and their severe judgment was perpetuated by later generations. Between the seventeenth and twentieth centuries, however, intermittent Gothic survivals, revivals, and reinterpretations worked to transform this disapproving assessment to one of awe. Eventually, medievalists began to probe every detail of the legacy built by the once-despised Goths; their buildings had, by the new standard, now become extraordinary. Rococo and Victorian are more recent instances of architectural production that was severely condemned and rejected, only to be later praised.

Herdeg detours around this formidable barrier of architectural judgment by advancing general assumptions about design principles while he discusses specific episodes in recent architectural history. This is a decidedly curi-

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ous approach to a discussion about ugly buildings and requires closer examination.

In the two longer chapters of the book, "Harvard Architects and the Bauhaus Ethos" and "Buildings: Design Confusion and Its Results," Herdeg juxtaposes examples of good and bad buildings, such as Karl Friedrich Schinkel's Old Museum, Berlin, 1822, and Philip Johnson's Sheldon Memorial Art Gallery on the Lincoln campus of the University of Nebraska, 1963. His position is that good architecture thoroughly integrates the shape and organization of space, the composition of form, the use of structure, the resolution of function, and the promotion of meaning. His finely crafted analyses of building projects, in which he demonstrates the reductive, simplified, unresolved collection of parts in one design in contrast to their effective integration in another, will be pored over by eager design students for some time to come. His discussion points to "the exalted task" of architecture, which is "to offer the beholder an intellectual challenge and an emotional reward whatever its pragmatic duty." He develops this theme by referring to design principles such as the use of irony, analogy, and metaphor; response to models; prefiguration and recall; and the figural character of space, hierarchy, and scale. He never explicitly explains or defends these principles. They simply take shape like fundamental truths during the course of specific discussions.

The basis of their authority will be considered shortly; at this point it should be noted that his analyses possess the virtue of constituting the only sustained criticism we have of work by Philip Johnson and I. M. Pei. For more than two decades, the most recent designs of Johnson and Pei have been instantly accepted as standards of architectural excellence. Despite deprecatory mumbling in some corners of the profession, their work is often celebrated with unquestioning emulation. Yet each architect has produced one clunker after the other in all parts of the country. In examining buildings such as 1001 Fifth Avenue, the IDS Center in Minneapolis, and the art museum at Cornell University, Herdeg demonstrates that the emperors are unclothed.

The subtitle of the book, *Harvard Architecture and the Failure of the Bauhaus Legacy*, may suggest that Herdeg has based his undertaking on a historical study of cultural transfer, notably the exodus from Germany of architects associated with the Bauhaus. In his third major chapter, "Teaching: A Critique of the Gropius Method," he sets out what he claims was a Bauhaus/Gropius methodology for teaching design. He maintains that at the Bauhaus, the German design school that Gropius ran from 1919 to 1928, function was emphasized at the expense of other considerations; this restrictive "Bauhaus legacy," as Herdeg terms it, was supposedly continued at Harvard. Many architects who graduated from this program became leaders in architectural practice after World War II. Their approach to design problems, as learned at Harvard, was to devise a plan that diagrammatically accommodated functional considerations. This schematic plan was then encased in elevations intended to produce an immediate visual effect. In short, the facade decorated the diagram.

Herdeg then claims that eleven students from Gropius's design program have set the standard for the profession as a whole, although he is vague on why he selected this institution and this group of students. He remains silent about other major designers active during these decades (Frank Lloyd Wright and Louis Kahn and Mies van der Rohe and the Saarinens, to mention only architects who practiced in America, taught extensively, and trained scores of young designers in their offices); he bypasses those enormous architectural firms such as Skidmore, Owings & Merrill that created the architectural image of corporations and governmental and educational institutions; and he makes no mention of other major schools of architecture (Berkeley, Cornell, and Illinois among them) where literally thousands of architects during the decades of the thirties, forties, and fifties were educated. He never questions whether the influence of major architects other than Gropius resulted in good architecture, or whether generally the quality of work by architectural leaders is to be held responsible for the quality of work produced by their followers. Buildings with glass and steel curtain walls dominate—some would say desecrate—the American city today. Mies is the grand master of this approach to design. Is Mies, therefore, responsible for the character of the American city? Herdeg does not consider other influ-

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ences on Gropius-trained designers. The architecture of Johnson and Pei, for example, was powerfully influenced by Mies. What significance does this possess in relation to their Harvard education?

In asserting that what had been taught in Germany was perpetuated in New England, Herdeg uses as evidence fragments of a few statements by Gropius, the published catalogues from Harvard for the years 1937 to 1953, and a handful of problems given in studio during that time. In this enterprise, he remains adamant that he is not writing history, merely providing "an educated personal assessment of certain ideas and their manifestations." This position is utterly disingenuous, proferring an interpretation of select historical materials while explicitly rejecting all responsibility entailed by such an undertaking. The result is a spectacularly distorted presentation of the Bauhaus. Among the matters that Herdeg ignores are: the fluctuating attitudes toward curriculum by various Bauhaus masters between 1919 and 1933; the different and problematic position of architecture at the school in terms of instruction and within the context of other work produced there (through most of this period, architecture was not even taught in a separate studio or as a distinct discipline, as were the other arts); and Gropius's shifting notions about his own architecture and his efforts during the 1920s to grapple with architectural technology, the problems of low-cost housing, and a contemporary design idiom. By plucking a few citations from the past, but without confronting the complexity of a historical situation, Herdeg feigns the presentation of historical circumstances to buttress an argument about their consequences in America. It is an unfortunate method that throws up the illusion of history to justify opinion.

What lies behind this unusual procedure is that Herdeg finds modern architecture that is based primarily on function to be ugly. His comparisons of buildings derive from this premise. He professes, however, to begin with ugly modern architecture; he then associates Gropius with this architecture and condemns him on the premise of functionalism. This sleight of hand is the consequence of inadequate history serving insufficient theory.

If an event, such as the Gropius era at Harvard, is to be understood historically, then it must be investigated as history. Situations from the past are not easily understood, for inevitably they are dense with conflict and unclarities. When considering an architecture from the past, the specific hierarchy of values of that time needs to be established and the particular meanings ascertained with which those forms were imbued. To establish a context, and to explore intention on the basis of that context, requires perseverance in equal measure to insight. Quotations collected from the past are not explanations. When statements are removed from context, they become vulnerable and can be manipulated mercilessly. Severed from the ceremony that brought them about, they are rendered meaningless—or, what amounts to the same thing, can be declared to contain any meaning a user wishes them to possess.

The historic record is out of place, on the other hand, if buildings are analyzed on the basis of an internal design logic. It is this that Herdeg in fact provides, a method of comparative criticism. It is what he should have stayed

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with, because he cannot have it both ways: he cannot use history without accepting the obligations of the scholar, and he cannot justify formal analysis by means of historical innuendo.

This murky methodology is the result of Herdeg's belief in a timeless, universal architectural culture for which standards of quality have built up over the years like layers of sediment. "While formal properties are fixed through time and varying cultural conditions, values are not," he maintains. By assuming the absolute nature of design, Herdeg is free to compare Schinkel's museum with Johnson's, without assessing the motivations and purposes behind them, or taking into account crucial issues, such as the temporal, social, professional, and technological differences that permit us to understand each issue. The assumptions under which a contemporary designer operates, because they are part of our own experience, are necessarily easier to get at than are those of an architect who worked in the past. A writer occupied with present events, as a practitioner and teacher of architecture must primarily be, may find it obvious to transpose reflections about contemporary conditions back into past situations. Knowledge about the present, however, is not necessarily knowledge about even the recent past, as Herdeg's flawed reading of Gropius and the Bauhaus demonstrates.

Herdeg's anti-Gropius bias continues a more widespread disenchantment with the architect; yet to claim that Gropius transferred a restrictive method of architectural design to Harvard does nothing to support this opinion. Ironically, many of the architectural principles that Herdeg draws on for his building analyses were given life by that small group of progressive European architects, of whom Gropius was one of the most active and important members.

Herdeg's assessment of contemporary buildings, and the architectural principles on which they are based, provide a suggestive discussion. His efforts to force all this through the eye of a needle—Gropius from Bauhaus to Harvard—are uncalled for, problematic sorties into architectural history. The disjointed architectural discourse that ensues is couched in a querulous tone, rather than in the resonant voice appropriate to architecture's "exalted task."

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